Fantastic Fanzine Special

FANTASTIC FANZINE SPECIAL II

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Address all letters to: FANTAGRAPHICS' FAN-MAIL, Gary Groth, editor, 7263 Evanston Road, Springfield, Virginia 22150.

PAUL REW
116 Adalia Avenue
Tampa, Florida 33606

I was very much impressed by FF 13. While it was not the Quantum jump in quality number 11 was over number 10, it at least maintained your high standard of quality. And to be able to maintain high quality, is in my opinion, much more important. Not that I don't think improvement is good, but anyone could have a fluke issue while a steady flow of quality is very important, *and* much more difficult.

I am also impressed by the fact that the largest percentage of your art is by amatuers or semi-pros like Fantucchio. I didn't have to look at page after page of semi-rendered pro work at exorbitant prices. I think that these art-zines which have sprung up everywhere are a bit tiresome. Of course, editing a bunch of drawings can't be very difficult.

Getting down to specifics I must say that Purcell's interview was the highlight of the issue. It was the finest interview I have read in quite awhile. And the graphics by Fantucchio were superb. I find some of his methods to be a bit jarring,

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RUDI FRANKE 2-16-71

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EDITOR: Gary G. Groth; Fantagraphics, 7263 Evanston Road, Springfield, Virginia 22150 (703-451-3577)

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Writers featured this issue: Bernie Bubnis, Jan Strnad, Jeffrey H. Wasserman, Carter Scholz, Mike Catron, Alan Brennert, Dave Cockrum, Carl Gafford, Paul Levitz, Martin Pasko, Bill Cantey, Bob Zimmerman, Bill. G. Wilson, Gordon Matthews, Jim Wilson, Hank Rosenfeld.

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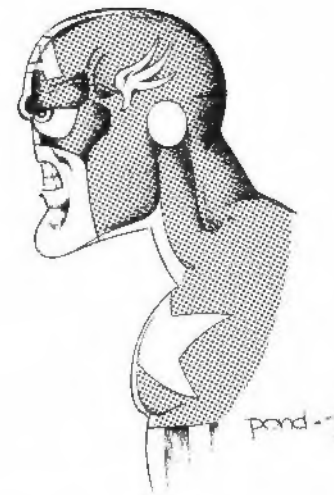
MIKE ROBERTS '71

EDITORIAL MEMOS

GARY GROTH



The editorial space of each issue of FANTASTIC FANZINE is the last thing I do. After working hundreds of hours, many months, on this issue, I'm almost at a loss as to what to say. But, of course, that's never stopped me before.

I think that this issue of FANTASTIC FANZINE is a particularly significant one. Its historical importance is obvious. When a History of Comics Fandom is written, the mammoth report on the 1971 Comic Art Convention in this issue will help chronicicle our fandom. It's also quite obvious that a lot of work has gone into the report. Jeffrey Wasserman deserves all the credit for compiling each individual report, an enormous job and one that I didn't want to tackle. Jeff got many of the finest writers in fandom together to write this report; Martin Pasko, Carl Gafford, Alan Brennert, Carter Scholz, and of course, he and Bob Zimmerman wrote much of it. Bill Cantey came through with, not one, but two reports in a pinch. With photos taken by Martin Berkenwald, Mike Catron and myself (totalling over 150 photographs of the con) I had a great selection to choose from. Dave Cockrum and Dennis Fujitake did drawings especially for the report (note Dave's humor strip on page 24). And Berni Wrightson... Take a look at that masterpiece decorating the EC Panel Report on page 38. With the heaviest work schedule he's had in years, he did this drawing for a tight deadline. There's just not enough I can say about him or his work. Thanks again, Berni! And then, Phil Seuling is thoroughly dissected in a 6-page interview that acts as a prologue to the convention report.

And if you think we're going to do it again next year, you're crazy!

I believe there's a new fanzine being published with the sole purpose of presenting reports of every comic convention in the country. That, plus the fact that FF's new publisher, Alan Light, will be offering a three record set of convention activities and a Memory Book with photos and transcriptions, has given me reason enough *not* to feature another lengthy New York Comicon report. Thank God! Jeff said he doesn't want another nervous breakdown 'til he recovers from this first one.

As all of you probably know, this issue of FANTASTIC FANZINE is the first to be published by Alan Light's Dynapubs. I think that this is the first time something like this has been done in fandom, and I think this publishing-changeover will be to your advantage as well as to mine. For me, Dynapubs' taking over the publishing and distribution of FF will save me countless hours of bookkeeping, mailing, keeping files and cross-files, and most important, I won't be losing money on FF any longer, which was perhaps the biggest burden. Dynapubs' printer is much more reasonable than my own, and because of this, FF can contain many extra features in future issues, including interior color. Though Alan Is in charge of publishing and distribution, I still retain total editorial control, and am in charge of *all* of FF's contents. Please send your LOC's to me, and your subscription money, Change of Address's, etc. to Dynapubs.

This issue's cover is the long-awaited Dave Cockrum wrap-around piece that has been squeezed off the cover spot twice already! It's printed in two colors, though all future covers will be printed full color. Incidentally, this cover was drawn two years ago, but still ranks as one of my favorite pieces of Dave's work. Thanks for putting up with the delays, Dave.

This issue does not contain three of the features that were advertised, and I'll explain why here. First and foremost was the space factor. Several of the planned features ran over their estimated page count, and as a result, squeezed others out. The strip by Howard Chaykin may appear next issue, as negotiations with Howard are still in progress. The page of interior color was substituted for a piece of professional work that will appeqr next issue. Metro Con Highlights was squeezed out of this issue, but may appear soon in a new publication from FANTAGRAPHICS. ["Highlights," meaning photographs with transcriptions of the Keynote Speech by Denny O'Neil and the "Writers of Comics" panel, which was said by many to be the finest comics panel ever done at a comicon.

Speaking of the Washington Comic Convention, I'd like to thank all the people that came and made it a success. To Frank and Ellie Frazetta for rushing down late Saturday evening to attend the second day of the con. Frank moderated a special seminar the second day, which took place in his exhibition room, which housed over twenty of his beautiful paintings. Unfortunately no recording of this event was taken. And to Len Wien and Marv Wolfman and Berni Wrightson -- and all the other pros who came down and helped with the activities. [An interview with Denny O'Neil, conducted at the convention, will appear next issue].

In the reprint section this issue, I attempted to present the best artwork from the older, itek-printed issues of FF, in which much of the detail and fine line work was lost. Three of the drawings are reprinted from last issue because of the poor reproduction they received. Barry Smith's Silver Surfer page has never been published in an issue of FF, even though an 11" x 14" poster of it had been made some time ago. I should mention that this is an older piece of work, certainly not representative of what Barry does now, but still, in my opinion, a very fine piece of artwork.

Jim Wilson will become a regular columnist beginning with the next issue of FF. His FF Control satire this issue is a little different from most fan satires, to say the least, and your opinions on it are wanted. His column, *Highest Castle, Deepest Grave*, will begin next issue as a replacement of Tony Isabella's Windmills. Tony Isabella will not have any more work published in FANTASTIC FANZINE because of personal problems that have developed between us.

Donald Wong debuts this issue, with a fine piece of humor-art on page 81. Don will be a regular contributor. Vincent Marchesano helped me out in a pinch, and did an illustration for Bill Cantey's short story this issue, and will have much more work in next issue. Vincent's "pocketzines" advertised in The Buyer's Guide ccontain a lot of his own strip-work, and even though the books are very small and the strip-work reduced quite a bit, they contain some of Vincent's best work and shouldn't be passed up. Wayne Pond does some outrageous superhero caricatures (note above) and some very nice, serious wash work, which will be presented in future issues.

I'd like to digress from further comments on the 'zine for a couple minutes and bring up something that's been bothering me for awhile. I've heard reports to the effect that Mark Hanerfeld has resigned from National, sold all his comics and has generally left comic fandom altogether. I hope that these are just exagerated reports (I haven't checked them out yet) because, as anyone who knows Mark will attest, Mark is one of the nicest people in the business, and one of the comics' staunchest supporters. Mark actually saved the '71 Metro Con from being a total financial wipe-out by bringing quite a few pieces of original artwork down to be sold at the auctions. If this is true, I can only wish Mark all the success for the future.

Next issue will sport a full color cover by the master of the mysterious -- BERNI WRIGHTSON! There will be interior color, interviews with Denny O'Neil and Dan Adkins, artwork and articles by FF's regular line-up of super-talented artists and writers. And there will be a letters column, so please write and give me your thoughts on this issue.

Bernie Bubnis

SO, YOU'RE DAVID BERG?

Yeah, that's about what I said to him. In the past I might have gushed a little and asked him to autograph my arm, but these days I'm a pro too! Yeah, that's what I said to him, just before I gushed and asked him to autograph my arm.

Pro or no pro -- I'm still a fan at heart and the sight of David Berg enjoying his first comic convention (NY Circa 1969) was all I needed to tag behind him. I spotted him signing papers and shaking hands outside of an elevator at the Statler Hilton. He was flanked by two charming young pre-teeners (although his daughter insisted she was 13) and a look of despair on his face.

"Wow, I never realized that so many people knew me!"

Surely he knew his fame amongst MAD readers, but I don't think he realized that organized fandom revered its honored guests in splashy, affectionate greetings of oooha and ahhhs.

The subject of the esteem of some artists were held came up when we saw a fan pay fifty dollars for a Kirby original. This brought up the discussion of the price of talent and another delightful sidelight of organized fandom -- the splashy, affectionate display of money.

In the corner of the dealer hall was our good friend Ed Aprill. Ed had a sizeable amount of original artwork for sale and one piece caught David's eyes -- a splash page from his very own COMBAT KELLY. I saw that glow on his face and tried to lead him in the other direction. He stood his ground, unhooked his arm from mine and was off to the races with Aprill:

'Say, isn't that a page of COMBAT KELLY by David Berg?" says David Berg.

"Who?" mumbled Ed Aprill.

"That must be worth a few bucks!"

"Who?" mumbled Ed Aprill.

"What would something like that cost me?" slyly smiles Mr. Berg.

"It's yours for a five spot," says out good friend Ed Aprill.

I braced David as I felt him tense up his muscles and start to fall backwards. His mouth moved up and down, but so sound was made.

"Kirby -- $50 ... Berg -- $5 ... $5??" he finally mumbled.

About this time I noticed a slender gentlemen pushing through the crowd towards us. He was dressed casually enough and I figured him for a Larry Ivie type who wanted to talk shop with Berg. It turned out to be Bill Everett who just wanted to say hello and tell Berg what a pleasure it was working with him in the past. Dave couldn't remember Everett's name so I whispered to him that he was the creator of the Sub Mariner (a subtle hint to jog that fantastic Berg memory into action).

"Good to see you Mr. Mariner, it's been a long time."

It was finally determined that Dave hired Bill years ago and this was the first time they've seen each other in ages. As a matter of fact it was the first time Berg had seen anyone in years.

I picked up a Captain Marvel tie clip for my newest son (It was just going to be a case of father like son for my young-un or I'd surely trade him to Phil Seuling for an early copy of BATMAN.) Mr. Berg chuckled and let me in on a bit of information I was never aware of -- he told me he posed for C. C. Beck and in reality (comic book reality) I was standing next to the good Captain Marvel. Berg, a handsome strong faced man for his years did very well conjure up visions of Captain Marvel in my mind. I could readily see the resemblance and was in awe for the rest of the night.

We went to have dinner in the hotel restaurant. The table next to us was occupied by visiting tourists from Germany and France. His button cute daughter struck up a conversation with one of the younger Claude Killy types and I learned a very interesting fact about David Berg -- he has learned to say, "I am David Berg -- I draw for MAD MAGAZINE" in seven different languages. He stopped mid meal to shake hands and sign autographs, menus, napkins, and one check that wasn't ours.

Forget it, my friends, you can have all the original David Berg art you can carry at five bucks a shot, with my blessing. Remember that the talent and essence of the Berg artistic and personal beauty is beyond the scale of any amount of money.

Mr. Berg, your value as a friend is most surely worth more than all your artwork; and I've got just one word for Mr. Ed Aprill:

"Who?"

THE J.S. STRNAD HANDY REFERENCE GUIDE TO FOILING THE P.O.

Written by JAN STRNAD **Illustrated by ROBERT KLINE**

I suppose it's normal for Kansas to have more than its share of postal difficulties, having only recently been forced to abandom the time-honored Pony Express System when our final horse was struck down by an International Harvester somewhere along the Pennsylvania Turnpike, but all the same it's a little depressing at times.

The change wasn't an easy one for us to make. Many carriers had grown fond of the scent of horse's sweat on all incoming and outgoing mail, and I'll admit I had been looking forward to it as something of a distinquishing characteristic for my magazine. I even had a small ad campaign worked out along those lines: "Buy ANOMALY -- The Fanzine With A Flavor All Its Own!". But once the postmaster learned of the many advantages a machine-operated office provided, there was no stopping Kansas from going modern.

For one thing, the machines could mangle mail nearly five times faster than any mere human. No human limb could hope to compete with arms of steel. A private contest of clerks was organized to prove the machine's superiority, and though many strongly thewed youth turned out to challenge the "new-fangled contraption" none succeeded in felling the metal newcomer. I recall one particularly well-muscled black lad, recruited by his fellows especially for the task who immediately won the heart of the crowd when he vacated his post at the stockyards to "make junk outta 'dat piece 'o tin". Employed weekdays to bludgeon cattle with an oversized sledgehammer, the boy walked up to the new machine with the blood still wet on his coveralls. He stood like a pagan god above the sacrificial altar and looked the gadget straight in the electric eye; a tight smile played itself slowly across his mouth. Two conveyor belts ground into action and packages of a hundred sizes and shapes headed toward each contestant. Huge black arms shot out and massive hands like vises locked the first package in their grip. The muscles in his arms tightened into rock-hard consistency and the package crumbled under the pressure. As the collapsed remains were carried away by the conveyor, the youth's eyes were already summing up the next object, a long narrow package nearly two inches thick. With the edge of his hand he slashed the victim through the center and then folded it double, slashed again, and folded it once more before unwillingly letting it pass on -- there was obviously more he would like to have done were speed not a deciding factor. The third package came into reach; a small box, only four inches to a side but of oak nearly an inch thick, nailed, glued, and dovetailed. The giant only grinned, placed the box atop his bicep and brought his forearm down upon it with a crash. The box splintered into a hundred pieces. The crowd roared and hurriedly gathered the shards of wood as souvenirs. The lad continued, smashing, crushing, destroying all. Like a modern John Henry he fought, but, alas, to no avail. At the end of the given time, the machine had piled a stack of debris clearly four

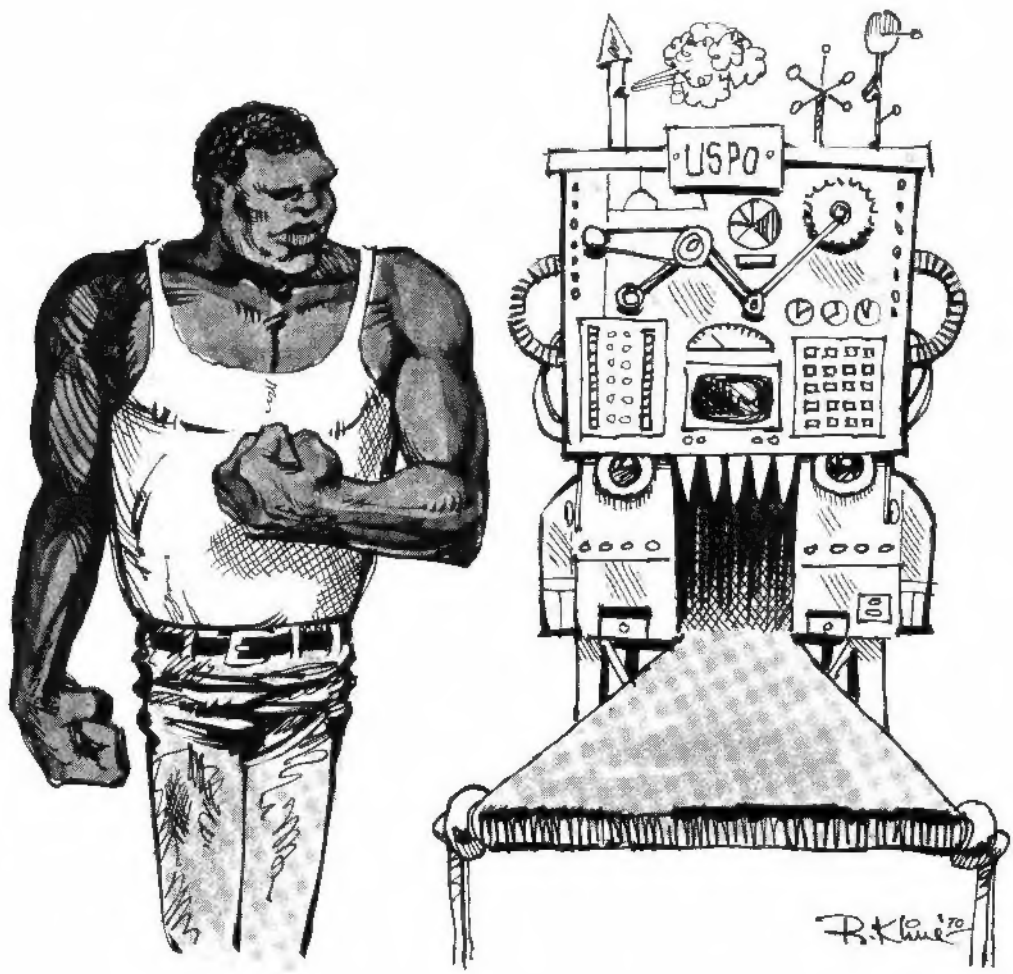
times the height of the boy's, and though it was unanimously agreed that the youth had annihilated his packages with an admirable degree of variety and finesse, the machine had indeed performed with unequalled speed and was well worth installing in the main post office. The postmaster hummed to himself.

A second advantage the machines offered was in delivery. A man on a horse generally knew where he was supposed to go and would invariably have numerous tales to tell at each stop and could hear all about what to expect along the rest of the way. In this way, the rider was prepared for where he was going, the post office clerk who handed him his mail load knew he had the proper rider going the proper place, and quite often even the horse knew which way to head should some misfortune befall the rider. Chances to misroute mail were pitifully scarce. Under the new system, the mail was handed from the post office clerk to the carrier who drove it to the airport where it was handed over to airport personnel who tossed it on the nearest conveyor belt which transported it to whatever plane happened to be waiting at the other end and on which it was promptly flown to wherever the plane was hijacked. The possibilities bred into this modern conception were endless. In this manner the stupidity and criminality of every person combined with the blind obediance of the machine to provide maximum fallibility and highest chance of error. The postmaster beamed as he thought of letters circling endlessly from New York to Los Angeles to Miami to Havana and back again; of letters lying in heaps at airports fraught with weather, plane, or union difficulties; and of letters caught eternally, irretrievably, in the jet stream of air currents hundreds of feet above the earth. But best of all were the parcel post items, for no package constructed by man could yet withstand the weight of even the smallest of the jet transports -- where many a horse's hoof had failed to totally demolish a particularly well fortified package, the miracle of modern engineering would succeed. One sudden jar loosening one package from its place on one conveyor belt and dropping it unnoticed in front of one wide wheel supporting one exceedingly heavy aircraft, and box and contents would soon be dust. The postmaster clapped his hands together and laughed aloud.

But the most subtely fiendish was yet to come.

"Think," the government agent said, "of the utter confusion you can cause. Even the most simple procedure can be made incredibly complex, vastly inscrutable to the layman, and also inordinately expensive. For instance, suppose a letter is genuinely undeliverable. The simple (and therefore unthinkable) thing to do would be to return it to the sender; with first class mail there is little you can do to complicate matters, though we do have people in Washington studying the problem. But third class -- Hoo-hah! First, do not return any item marked 'Return Requested'; ah, true, we *used* to return such items, and thousands of people across the United States still believe we *do*, but no longer! Now they *must* say 'Return Postage Guarenteed'! (Do you know how few people can even *spell* 'guarenteed'? Chortle!) And if they want it forwarded, they have to say "Forwarding Postage Guarenteed' plus they have to pay an extra fee! And if they want to be notified that their material is undeliverable and they haven't said 'Return Postage Guarenteed', they have to pay *another* fee just to find out that we've thrown it in the trash! And then, if they want the forwarding addresses of people who've moved and whose mail we've forwarded, they have to pay still *another* fee plus having to write 'Address Correction Requested' on the envelope along with all that other gluk! He-he -- they'll be lucky to have room enough left for the address!"

The postmaster roared and the government agent shook and the clerks became hysterical. The entire office was in an uproar while the patrons standing nearby cringed in terror and stared in wide-eyed disbelief, afraid of what they had just heard. Their mouths hung open and their faces went white. Their knees rattled together and their minds screamed in fear and confusion. It was mad, totally impossible, that such a fate could befall the residents of a quiet, unassuming little state tucked securely within its fields of wheat. And yet it



was true. Unavoidably, irrevocably true.

So it was into this situation that I strode, pile of freshly printed fanzines stacked neatly in the cardboard box tucked lovingly in my arms. And I was greeted by the oldest, meanest, most wrinkled, withered, wretched, and rotten postal clerk to ever walk the earth. Her eyes glowed with an evil malevolence; her hair was pulled back in an obscene bun to clearly reveal her sharply pointed ears from which hung skull-and-crossbones earrings; her teeth were fangs and her fingernails were claws and her skin was that of a poorly preserved mummy; her disposition was that of people who kick dogs, step on cats, dangle goldfish by their tails, and teach in Boston schools. She sipped blood from a goblet as she spoke.

"We don't take no mail from hippies," she said as she saw me approach.

I was taken aback! Granted, my hair is far from short and my clothing tends toward the modern, but I am in reality one of the straightest dudes to ever see the light of day. I mean, I have a job on campus, I brush my teeth, love apple pie, bathe regularly, spend money, and have never dropped pot or smoked LSD in my life -- and yet here I was, all of a sudden, *branded!* My lower lip quivered and tears welled up in my eyes as I began to explain that she had evidently made a terrible mistake. But no sooner had the words "Well actually, ma'm..." passed my lips when she cut me off and in a blaze of fury screamed,

"And we don't take no *backtalk* from hippies *either!*" She slammed the window in my face and I was rendered helpless. Slowly I regained my compousure and, cradling my box of fanzines in my arms once more, walked quietly home to ponder my first encounter with the new regime.

Upon reflection, I determined that my first mistake was in my basic attitude. I had walked into the post office to request a favor -- I should have *marched* in demanding a right. After all, if I paid taxes, that's what I would be paying taxes for. Yes, it was my right as a citizen to obtain postal service.

My second mistake had been my ignorance. Not knowing precisely what was expected of me nor what I was entitled to receive in return had made me nervous, insecure, and suggestible. So I studied, for three weeks, the charts, lists, and pamphlets plastered around the post office walls. I learned all about third and fourth class mail, second class mailing privileges, bulk and magazine rate. I learned how much space had to be left on the envelope for the address, and what had to be printed on them to get undelivered fanzines returned. I learned how much it cost to mail things within the United States, to Canada, and overseas. I even memorized the commemorative stamps for the last three years. I was leaving nothing to chance.

And finally, and most important of all, I conducted a survey. I began by scrutinizing my own mail, conversing with friends and correspondents as to what successfully passed through the postal gauntlet and what was lost or demolished. I talked with businessmen who dealt frequently with the postal service, those who fared well and those who mailed themselves into bankruptcy. And lastly, I transferred my findings to IBM Cards and fed them into a computer. The results were staggering -- an unbelievable plan of action was clearly outlined, and I followed it exactly.

I have been publishing ANOMALY now for many months, and since that first unfortunate encounter I have experienced no trouble whatsoever in getting my mail delivered or returned. Coupled with a good amount of self-confidence, I believe the Strnad Method is as close to infallible as any system could be; indeed, I have enjoyed a remarkable 98% completed-delivery record -- the missing 2% may, I think, be attributed to normal human failure. I have given FANTASTIC FANZINE exclusive printing rights so that the Method may be shared with the rest of fandom; it appears here in a basic form that may easily adapted to suit particular needs and situations. Here then is the Strnad Method for Foiling the P.O.:

PART I -- FANZINES

It has been proven that the type of mail most likely (by good percentage) to be delivered is junk mail. The Post Office has found that it pays to deliver junk mail; it not only gives them the appearance of doing something constructive, while actually serving no good whatsoever but it also bolsters their percentage-of-completed-deliveries record tremendously. This forms the basis of the Strnad Method: make your fanzine look as much like junk as possible. (In some cases, no change in format is necessary at all.)

STEP ONE -- THE FORMAL COMPLAINTS. In different handwriting and on varying stationary, notify the post office that you are receiving totally worthless material and request that they deliver no more such items. (Be careful not to imply that the material is in any way pornographic; pornography comes under the jurisdiction of the vice squad, and they'll get anyone they can lay their hands on.) Mention your own fanzine by name as an example of this useless trash in at least one quarter of the letters and request that future copies either be held by the post office or destroyed, preferably the latter.

STEP TWO -- THE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR. Write similar letters under different names to the editor of the local newspaper(s). You need not specifically mention your fanzine in every letter, but do mention it frequently enough that the name will stick in the editor's mind and he will pick one of these letters to print. When the letter is printed, send a copy of the paper to the P.O. and circle the letter in red pen or pencil; in the margin write, "WHY DON'T YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS???" Naturally, they won't - this is precisely the sort of things the post office thrives on.

STEP THREE -- THE PHONE CALL. Phone the main post office and identify yourself as the publisher of X Magazine and explain that some of the branch offices have refused to carry any more of your "packets." (The word "packets" is important; while "magazine" implies something morally objectionable, "packet" implies merely junk, useful to no one and yet perfectly legal.) You will find the postal employees friendly and eager to serve you. Caution: at no time should you hint or imply that your "packet" is actually worth receiving! It must be pure unmitigated *garbage* or the employees may succumb to their natural temptation to destroy anything of value.

STEP FOUR -- THE ENVELOPES. If you mail your fanzine in an envelope, you have one more opportunity to prove your sincerity and to indicate the utter trashiness of your material. Make your envelope busy and cluttered. Print in large letters in a prominent spot, "VERY IMPORTANT - OPEN IMMEDIATELY!" This is an old ploy of professional junk mailers and verifies the contention that the insides are without value; the post office will recognize it immediately and you will swell in their esteem. Also, if it is at all possible, include the word 'SWEEPSTAKES" on the envelope or a statement to the effect that "YOU MAY BE THE GRAND WINNER!" If you can manage this added touch, the world is yours for the taking.

STEP FIVE -- TUL ADDRESSES. Under no circumstances should you address the envelope to a particular individual. This would indicate that some degree of selection has gone into your choice of recipients, and must be avoided at all costs. "Resident" or "Postal Patron" will not only suffice to get the "packet" delivered, but will, in fact, practically insure it. If you find it necessary to differentiate between the residents of one location, remain as general as possible; for instance, "X Magazine Subscriber."

If these five steps are followed closely, you will find the post office an extremely pleasant agency to work with, full of helpful suggestions and complete cooperation.

PART II -- PACKAGES

Mailing packages successfully is no easy feat and should not be attempted until you have won the gratitude of the local P.O. with your previous junk mailings. When you can no longer hold the artwork, etc you have promised to return to the artists, and you find yourself obligated to send packages through the mail, it is best to gather as many as possible to be mailed simultaneously. This again gives the impression that you are reasonably unconcerned as to who gets what and the post office will be much more likely to lend you their assistance.

Be sure to emphasize the fact that the merchandise you are sending was *not* ordered by the intended recipient and that he most probably would have no need for it under even the most bizarre circumstances. (You may wish to devise make-believe merchandise such as tongue-warmers or gall bladder agitators to serve as examples.) Also mention that rough handling may cause the more expensive items to break down before the guarentee is expired -- a horrendous situation for any manufacturer and one with which the post office will sympathize.

With packages it is much more important that you be able to adjust your stories to the situation and be able to think rapidly on your feet than it is to memorize a step-by-step procedure. You must also be able to lie blatantly, but this should pose no problem to most fanzine publishers (as a quick glance at their advertising will indicate).

I sincerely hope the Strnad Method will gain fandomwide acceptance and will abolish forever the spectre of undelivered magazines and mangled artwork that has become a tradition with post offices across the country, and will once again place moral atrocities exclusively in the experienced and capable hands of the military.

Best of luck to you all...

Strnad

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN PERPETUALLY BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST ANNUAL COMIC ART CONVENTION...

PHIL SEULING

Conducted by Jeffrey Wasserman & Bob Zimmerman

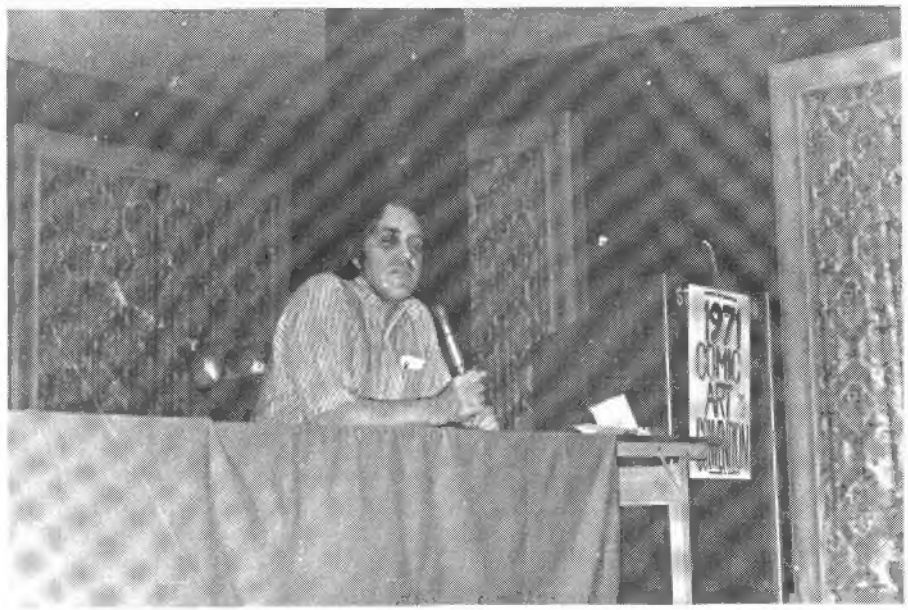
On a windy evening, we journeyed to Phil Seuling's apartment in Luna City on Coney Island. It was only two weeks since the convention was over and yet we were to relive it again that night. We found the building with ease and with a little difficulty found ourselves at Phil's door. We were ushered into the apartment and directed toward a room further back in the apartment. There we found Phil sitting in an old lounge chair, surrounded by shelves of cartoned comics. The walls of his den were decorated with old comic strips and original art. The floors too, were quite filled with comics-oriened items.

Phil Seuling is a life long resident of Brooklyn, New York. He was born in, he was married in, and he is living in Brooklyn. His wife's name is Carole and together, she and Phil can boast of two daughters. Phil graduated college with a Bachelor of Arts degree, along with about 60 credits past that. His profession is that of an English teacher at Brooklyn's Lafayette High School. There he also has a films and communications course.

After clearing the floor so we could sit, we plugged in our trusty tapercorder and inserted a rather dubious tape cassette. With the BMT's D, QJ, F & QB trains roaring along the tracks but two blocks from Phil's apartment and with the ocean howling through the wide open window, we started.

BOB ZIMMERMAN: When did you first get interested in comics?

PHIL SEULING: I guess the first time I ever saw one was when I was a little kid.



Do you mean when did I start this recent thing *[pointing to the many items around the room]*?

BOB: Yes, that's right.

PHIL: Well, in about 1960, or '59 or '58, a few friends and myself got into a nastalgia conversation. We started asking, "Do you remember Captain Marvel?" "Hey, whatever happened to *him*?" "Do you remember this? Do you remember that?" I guess everybody has gone through that trip.

So, we visited a lot of bookstores and a couple of us came across some old comic books. One day, (the first day we came across them) we picked up a couple of comic book MAD's, and some other magazines. This is what we were talking about. "Let's take them for conversation pieces." So when we brought them to the counter, the guy charged us something like two and a quarter for the comic books and one paperback book. I asked "What kind of paperback is this?" He said "It's not the paperback; that's only a quarter. It's a dollar each for the comic books." "Come on, who's going to believe that?" He thought we were conning him. He thought that we were trying to show him that there was no value in comic books, and so he started to clam up. "If you don't like it, it's too bad." We got out of him some information; that there really were some people that collected comic books, and that they went for money. He told us then, "If I had SUPERMAN 1, I would sell it for fifteen dollars." Well, nobody in his right mind could believe that.

We got those books anyway! I think we finally paid fifty cents apiece for them. We got three books. Since then we both hit the bookstores a lot, and this other fellow and myself would show each other our prizes. We found three or four places in New York that sold old comic books.

My brother (whose 13 years younger than I am) was then interested in comics, and he found a place where they sell old ones. When he told me that he once paid a dollar-fifty, I nearly killed him. You know, it's a dollar-fifty! I'm from the days when we sold them for two for a nickel, three for a dime, out on the sidewalks on orange crates. I went down to this place and the guy wouldn't show me anything. He had gotten very cagey. I finally convinced him that I wanted to see some comic books and I went into the back of the store and there were a lot of very common ones. I looked through them all. There was one there with three characters that I hadn't seen for years: Captain America, Human Torch and Sub-Mariner. I couldn't get the guy any lower than three dollars. I had to have it, so I paid the three dollars. The book was rotting, it was really something you'd call decrepid, decaying; if you socked it against the wall you'd get a snowfall and no more book. I was really proud of it.

This collecting went on for about a year and we both had thirty books each. My friend and I decided, "If people buy these in New York for fifty cents where there are thousands of little book stores what about Poduncf and Rappahatchet, where there are none at all within a hundred miles? If people collect comic books out there, maybe they'll pay to get them? Ha, ha, ha!" *[The last comment was said with a greedy gleam in his eyes]*

We put an ad in a magazine for $2.50 for the three of us; the three who were originally on this nostalgia kick. Our initial investment was 75¢ each. We ad-

vertised, "Hey out there, we're selling comic books!" (To this day, that was the only advertisement that I ever made to encourage people to buy. I only advertise that I want to buy, because I always have less comics than I have people to buy them.) It was 75¢ each, and the one with the worst guess paid the extra 25¢. You see, we each made guesses as to how many responses we would get. One guy guessed three; that was the number *I* was going to pick. Another guy picked five and I had nowhere to go. 'Okay," I said, "I'll take seven and over." We got fifty answers, and that was astonishing. Result: Mail order business, and so we made up a rexographed sheet of all the comic books that we had. We made the decision to put in fifty dollars each, and we were going to buy old comics and become comic book dealers through the mail.

We wanted to amass one hundred and fifty dollars altogether, but one of the guys dropped out. He said that 75¢ was okay, but with a fifty dollar investment you're not kidding around anymore. We put our collection together and with the hundred dollars, went out buying old comics. We put out this long list and we priced them by date; the same mistake that every new collector who doesn't know what the hell he's doing makes. 1960 was a certain price, 1955 was a certain price, 1950 was a certain price. So obviously, you pick out the best books and leave the shit. But we didn't have good stuff anyway.

We sent the list out to these fifty people and we got a thudding, dull, zero of a response. Because we had the prices up there, if you wanted a book from 1945, it would be $75, or something to that effect. It would be a prize to get one of those old price lists right now. So we took the list back and cut the prices in half. Well, at that, somebody bought a coverless comic. That was our first sale; it was about a half a buck. We were in business.

In the next year, we sold almost nothing. We traded books and little by little we found some people in the area along with a thriving comic book exchange here in New York City. We were making money at it. Some months it was two dollars, others it was fifty cents, and then sometimes we had a ten dollar sale. "Wow, five bucks each! Ho, ho, hooo! *[With that old Sealing gleam again]* We're off the ground'" We never made a hundred dollars in a year.

Then two years after we were in this, and collecting, we hit the Mother Lode. One of those original letters that had come back to us was so fantastic that it was impossible to believe. The guy told us he had one thousand books, all of which were number ones, all of which were *pre 1942!* So would you believe that?

BOB: No. No.

PHIL: *Nobody* would believe *that*. Anyway, a couple of years later, we had nothing to do (now I'm in 1963) because Kennedy's assassination knocked the hell out of me; crushed me, you know. And it was Friday that Kennedy was assassinated and all that day it was black. On Sunday, I made a long distance phone call to the guy and I couldn't reach him. I got my partner and said to him, "Let's take a drive and get out of here." My partner said okay. We sent the guy a telegram telling him to call us back collect. He didn't. In the town where he lives, they deliver the telegrams when they see the guy. "Hey Joe glad you passed by, I have had a telegram for you for the past few days." He got the telegram a few days later and he phoned and told us to come the following weekend.

So the next weekend we went down and it was colder than a... *you know. It was cold! [Laughter]* We had no heater in the car. I mean I suffered for this business *[and amidst laughter]* to go on a long damn trip in an unheated car in the winter.

We got down there, hours later after wrong turns and everything. The guy showed where he had the stuff stashed and he *had* about one thousand number ones, *pre-1942!* There are that many around!

I don't think I can remember any duplicates in the whole thing. But this was just a ton of books. There was carton after carton after carton of books. My partner and I looked at each other. This was beyond our means to get. We were still in this penny-ante thing. I'm talking about 1963. Money has changed so rapidly that it was different then.

We asked him how much he wanted. "I was thinking about a thousand dollars.' That, for a thousand dollars, is the greatest bargain in the history of mankind. I would do that seven times a week if I could do it. At the time, neither of us could afford it.

We offered two hundred and fifty and finally got them for three hundred and fifty dollars. We settled on that, we shook hands on it and loaded them in the car, the front, the back, the trunk. On the way back, I opened the cartons. I'd be reading off some unbelievable titles; titles that I had never heard of. He didn't have SUPERMAN # 1, he didn't have BATMAN # 1, he didn't have ACTION # 1, he didn't have DETECTIVE # 27. Now if you can name another comic that you thought he didn't have, you'd be wrong. He had *everything else*. Those, the four biggest comics, he didn't have. But he did have PRINCE VALIANT # 26, he did have # 25, the first time I ever saw the thing. I didn't even know it was big size until I saw it there. He had GREEN LANTERN # 1. He had the "Daredevil battles Hitler issue, which was number one. He had. . just name it, he had it! STAR SPANGLED # 1. Every number one. He didn't have the ones from 1934 up, he didn't start collecting then. He had SUPER # 1, so you could see where the collection was blocked in there. Then we were in business. 'Now we put out a list and ooh!" *[Once again, his eyes gleamed]* And then we got people buying because now we had something to sell.

BOB: How much was that collection worth? Can you take a guess?

PHIL: I once estimated that even if we sold it at the best price in those days, we'd make about three thousand dollars on it. We probably made about three to four thousand dollars over the course of the next year and a half. This was a phenomenal return. Now, *today*, if we had those exact books, I'm sure they'd be worth ten thousand

JEFF WASSERMAN: That's because the economy has changed so much. People would be paying more and be willing to pay more.

PHIL: Also, the selling of comic books is a very strange business. There are such good vibrations everytime I meet people because everything I've sold them is so valuable, they love me for it. And it's not me, it's because that now with the sky-high prices on comic books, if you bought BATMAN # 1 from me for two hundred dollars, five years from now you'd thank me. Two hundred is no bargain; that's a fat price. Five years from now, if you tell people that you paid two hundred for it, they'll say, "Ooh wow, who did you know?"

BOB: In other words, your collection started in 1958, from what I gather *[Gesturing at Phil's huge collection]*?

PHIL: Well, that's when we started in business. But we didn't have that many. You're looking at ten thousand. *[Around the room]*

JEFF: Do you think there is a strong bond between comic fans?

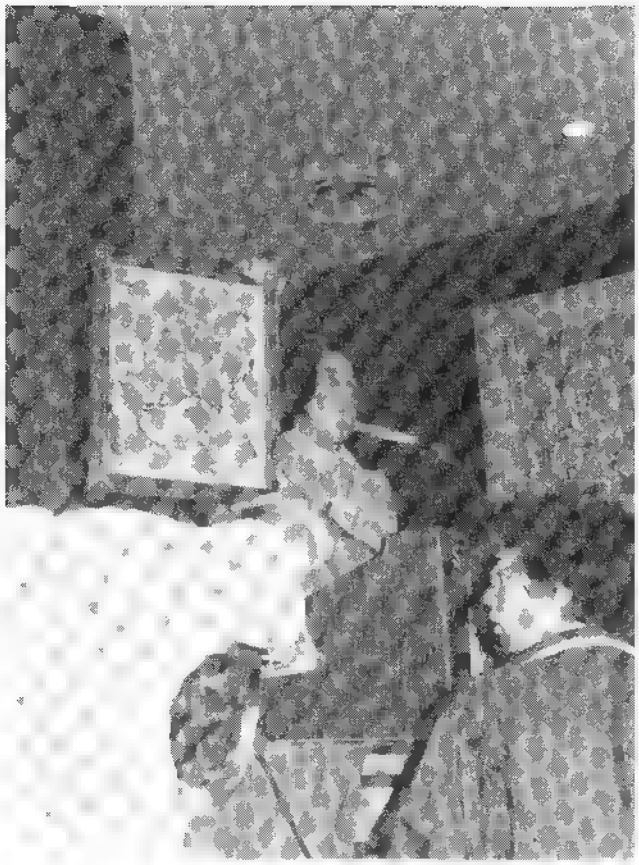
PHIL: Comic books seem to have a very good group around them. I don't know what it is; whether people are trying to return the good times, the entertainment, or the good feelings they get from comic books. I don't think that it's consciously that. But it must have something to do with it. "Listen, if this guy read comic books when I read comic books, how bad can he be?" This kind of kindred feeling It's been said a thousand times before Who you are, what religion you are, and stuff like that means nothing. Even what language you speak. Two plumbers, one from America and one from Red China would have much more in common than two guys who live in Brooklyn; one of whom is a minister and the other one is a carpenter. Who could talk more easily? The plumbers of course, even with sign language would have much more in common. We too have this mutual frame of reference, this mutual fund of knowledge, this mythos that we share. If I'm talking here and I say, 'Shit, I just banged my elbow. I wish I had a magic word to speak so that the pain wouldn't pain," you'd know what I'm talking about. That's because we share the same frame of reference. You couldn't say that in all company and be understood.

JEFF: Also in comics, for a long time you couldn't find anyone else who read comics. When you got to meet someone who shares your love for comics, which people have always turned their noses down on, you feel in good company.

PHIL: The people who read comics are not ashamed of it. There are people who are willing to embarrass you, who are willing to put you down. "Tell us about your comic books," they'll say loudly in strange company. And tell them, I do "They're beautiful, do you want to come and see them?" They're not going to embarrass me because I'm not the least bit ashamed of it. And of course when they see that you're not ashamed of it, they ask, *"Do you really have all those comic books?"* And they become very sincere and interested. The few idiots who tried to embarrass you feel left out of it all of a sudden, because the rest of the people really become interested. Anyway, about the story of how the business got started... that's essentially it. Except for the fact I bought out my partner two years ago since my end with the load of work (namely keeping up the correspondence) was growing greater than his.

JEFF: About the convention itself, how did they start? Beginning with the ones that were held in New York before yours.

PHIL: In late 1963, I began hearing about proposals to have meetings. It really



wasn't too good of an idea since too many people live in too many different places. What would you do at such a meeting? Show off your comic books? Nobody wanted to sell them. In 1964 a guy wrote to me and every letter was a cowritten so you can imagine what his mailing list was. He sent out to all the people he could get on his mailing list and told them we're going to have a convention. This is where it's going to be, we're going to have a professional artist there and he'll talk to us about his artwork. This prolific writer was Bernie Bubnis. I went to the convention and my partner and I supplied all the refreshments for the first convention... we brought a case of soda. *[Laughter.]* The soda was warm and it was a hot damn day and the room was small and sweaty. 1964. The nicest thing about it was that Bernie had someone make up buttons saying, "1964 COMICON" in red, white and blue. They were really beautiful. I still have some of those. But at last year's convention, or the year's before, I was tossing them around to the crowd at the auction.

BOB: It was last year's, 1970.

PHIL: Well, those buttons were beautiful and they're really from the *first* convention. And there's the proof of it. There's Bubnis, nobody can say there was a convention before his. The first convention was in New York in 1964, and if anyone wants to say, "Well, my friend came over to see me in 1938 and that was the *first* comic convention;" right. Sure it was. The first convention as a convention, the first one planned as a convention, the first one run in an organized manner was Bernie Bubnis' in New York, 1964. The following year it was [illegible] Golden Age comic book arts, which was a organizational tedium for its [illegible] and disorganization, although it was well-meaning everybody who was in it was in there, it's just that nothing ever happened. This was 1965. In 1966 they ran another one, but in 1964, the guy who was running it was so bewildered and confused that he told people that there was going to be one the next year. Another group got together and organized one, put down payments for the room and things like that there, but the other guy stole the pictures and never refunded to half of them and things were two or [illegible].

In [illegible], the same [illegible]. That was a lot of a year of confusion, where were saying things like, "Hey, this time, why isn't that more?" Now that the [illegible] who was running that was really fighting and [illegible] writer. He just couldn't keep details together, [illegible] to go to for [illegible] one of the people [illegible] was Mark Hanerfeld, and if you asked him something, he would say, "I don't know, he won't tell me."

In 1968, we got [illegible] and start [illegible] with [illegible] I got [illegible] interested [illegible] that [illegible] didn't know [illegible] absolutely [illegible] relief. He was really a weight [illegible] Jim Engle was an [illegible] in Vermont, and so that limited what we could do. Make Me Enern was the [illegible] the most [illegible] at the convention. But like there was nothing he could do in the planning of it; he found it difficult to help out. And the other one was a lawyer. Those were the five members. You have to have a lawyer, you absolutely must have a lawyer. That was the group.

I figured that it would be four guys working on the convention, but it turned out to be just one guy working on the convention. Me. Some of the befuddlement of past years was being passed on. I just couldn't do it anymore; it really took a lot out of me. That was the first big convention. All the conventions since 1964 had drawn 150, 250, and one of them went and drew 300 people. That was the biggest convention ever at that time, Benson's 1967 convention. That was a tremendous success. Well, I figured that we should do a little national advertising and call it the International Convention of Comic Arts. There were promises as to how people are coming in from France. (This was from the guy who was all talk). We did publicize it nationwide through mass fanzines and my list. We got 750 people, 750 people, that was absolutely incredible. Do you realize how many people that is? At the time, there were people who would bet you that there weren't that many fans in the country.

Where was this convention held?

PHIL: That was held in the Statler Hilton.

Was that the first one at the Statler Hilton?

PHIL: That was the first one [illegible] Statler Hilton. Now that was [illegible] and the last [illegible] the [illegible] one to this one guy who was a genuine leech, a parasite, who preyed on other people, and took credit for what other people did. I would not [illegible] be willing to take credit for it, so SCAD [illegible] completely [illegible] actual [illegible] ter's group [illegible] even exist anymore.

Anyway, [illegible] took all the profits to myself, which were pitifully small. The thing that limited it was that now we have to prepare for bigger numbers. If 750 came the first year, how many can come the next year? But we figured maybe even a thousand. Also... When I go to a convention and I pay whatever it is for a table ($10, $20, or even $50, as it is at my convention), I sit back and make a thousand dollars. *[Clapping his hands]* All these nice people come over, buy nice stuff and go away smiling. And they give me their money. I make a thousand dollars. His eyes started to glaze over. On the other hand, if I run a convention and break my ass for a year, make the same thing or less. Because now I can't make all the preparations that I would ordinarily. I made as much at my table in Dallas with a thousand people there as I did at my own convention with two thousand people. That was 1969. In [illegible] it was the same thing; almost no profit. And this year, I finally made enough at the convention combining everything that everybody paid in. I thought that this year's convention was perfect according to plan because everybody got more than we promised, more than we've they ever got at any other convention, it was bigger, it was better, it was more glamorous. It was a better bargain. How much is it if you divide three fifty by four?

JEFF: Quick Bob! *[Laughter.]*

BOB: Don't look at me.

PHIL: It comes out to about...

PHIL & JEFF: Eighty cents.

JEFF: Other places like Metro charge $4 for *two days* as Bob and I know.

PHIL: Dallas charged $6 for four days. So that's what I mean. There are some times when everyone comes out ahead, and a convention should be that. Everybody who put something into a convention should get more than enough back. Did you get three dollars and fifty cents worth out of this convention?

BOB: Ah, yeah.

JEFF: Sure. *[Meanwhile, Phil continued to ramble on, ignoring our answers]*

PHIL: If you say yes, then fantastic. The dealers pay fifty dollars apiece. That's important for they foot the early bills before the convention opens. The dealers, by paying a lot of money, get a lot in return. Look at that room we had! Fantastic! Do you realize that we had the television cameras in there and nobody even knew? In 1965, we had what we thought to be a big, big room. The television camera came in and the whole convention stopped. To bring the camera in and aim it in a certain direction, the cables and people behind it and the interviewer in front of it blocked off half of the room. There was this half of the room *[gesturing to the right]* and this half of the room *gesturing to the left]* and the camera, right in the middle. The convention came to a stop. That was how small the room was. This time, the television camera was in the room and nobody even knew it. We had last year, in smaller rooms, three television cameras at the same time, and even *that* didn't cause that much of a ripple. Last year it was a little crowded but even that we survived.

JEFF: They spent a longer time there last year. This year, it was just, 'Hello, this is Lew Wood, NBC News at the Comic Convention. Good-bye. *Laughter in the Rain.*' And that was it.

PHIL: They also interviewed Kirk Alyn, that was good. The convention is now at a stage now where if my plans go right, I come out happy, because financially I invest a lot. Time and energy I also invest a lot. I get a good return on that nice, fat, 'make me smile' return. Now we tell you that he was smiling. The people who come to the convention get a bargain. They should. I think that the people who come should pay less and less and get more and more. The fans for the professionals, it's an ego trip. People hang along with them and tell them how great their stuff is. They feel like a celebrity. Most artists are very underrated; they're treated very badly by everybody. They not only feel that way, it is true. They get something out of it. They get a cocktail party which I throw, may even get to sell some of their stuff to make the price of their airfare to and from the convention. The publishers get tremendous publicity out of it, and good will out of it. And the publishers pay even more than the dealers for a table. Publishers pay $100 for the advertisement in the program and sponsorship of the cocktail party. All the people put together for the cocktail party only pay half for the cocktail party; I pay the other half. As I said, everyone who pays to the convention should receive back many-fold. And I think they do. I'm always afraid of a convention where someone will say, "Well, what did I get for my money?" I have a feeling that that might happen, but never at my convention. That's why. Some of the things planned at this year's convention were planned a year in advance. There are things that are going to be at next year's convention that are already planned.

JEFF: Do you want to give any away?

PHIL: No, and I'll tell you why. Did you get disappointed at this year's convention? Was there anything promised that I didn't deliver? Did you know that Gardner Fox was going to be the guest of honor?

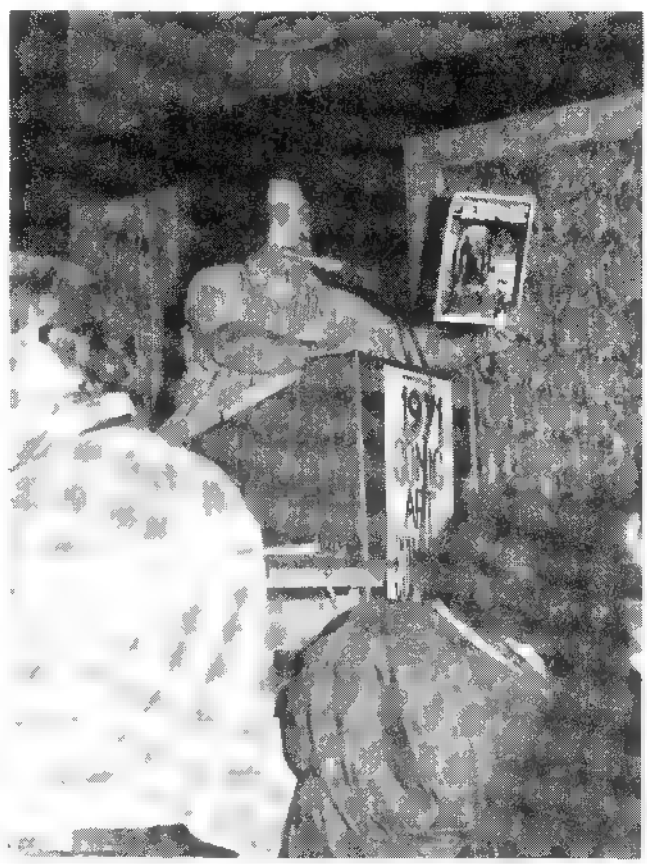
JEFF: "No," to all those questions.

PHIL: I wanted Gardner to be the guest of honor, but I didn't have the confirmation by the time I had to send out the notices. So in order not to disappoint anybody ("Gardner Fox will probably be guest of honor" and then Gardner says, "I can't make it"), I didn't release anything.

JEFF: Last year there were some tie-ups.

PHIL: Yeah. Well, as careful as I am, I still make some mistakes. But Kurtzman was there *this year*. Kirk Alyn was there unannounced. So you got more than you bargained for. This is the way it should be. I don't like to make any promises. For instance, three of four conventions have announced that Frazetta will be there. Now Frazetta *almost never* travels. Even in New York, he comes to a convention, looks around, and goes home. That's about it. And that's where he lives. At other convention, he was just never there. His track record is 100%. And yet people advertise, "FRAZETTA IS COMING!" I guess it's partly their own enthusiasm and trust and partly because Frazetta doesn't make it a definite, "No." He leaves them to believe that he will be there. I don't like that. I don't like to promise anything that may not be delivered.

I'll tell you something that was supposed to be at this year's convention. *Now*, you'll feel disappointed, but I don't care since you already told me it was a great convention. If I had advertised this thing, what a bummer it would've been. Robert Crumb's FRITZ THE CAT is being made into a full length animated feature. Full animation, like Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs. Fantastic! It's probably going to be finished in four months. October, November, December, around that time. I did the voice for one of the characters. The guy who's producing it is a close friend. I said to him, 'Why don't we put this one at the convention? Why don't we show the rushes, the advanced footage? Do you know you can actually see the characters moving around in *panels*, before they're inked in? Then they make a 16 milimeter film of the pencils to see how it's going to work? Did you ever see that? I've seen it. I've seen the black & white and the color rushes of Fritz The Cat and it's dynamite. It comes with the sound dubbed in and everything. The rushes last about 10 minutes. We were going to have Ralph Bakshi come down, talk about how animation is done, give demonstrations, show the backgrounds he had been comissioned to do for Fritz The Cat, show some of the frame by frame animation, bring some cells down, put them up for a wall display, and show the rushes of Fritz The



Cat, which will be the first full length animated film with an "X" rating. Fritz was not Little Orphan Annie. It was dynamite. A month before the convention, before the Progress Report was to be put out, the whole animation studio had to be moved, lock, stock and barrel, from New York to Hollywood. All the animators that New York could provide were not enough that would be needed for Fritz The Cat' He had to move where the animators were. Warner Brothers, MGM, Disney, they're all out on the west coast

JEFF. Who produced it?

PHIL: Bakshe Krantz, that's who's doing the picture. Warner Brothers is backing it. That was going to be shown at the convention. What a disappointment. If I had advertised that, the fans would have been disappointed. I would have felt worse than anyone.

BOB. What are some of the future plans for the convention that you can tell us about?

PHIL: It's been in the back of my mind to have some skits and little scenes acted out from the comic books. In type humor. Satirical humor. That's been planned for three years and it's never been done. It takes a lot of time to sit and write, to plan, to cast, to rehearse and to do it. So, I don't think we'll ever do that, but I'd love to

Jeff Jones will have an exhibition next year. It will be advertised and he's going to have a new sculpture. That's the first one over there, and he's going to have another one next year. *[There, atop a bureau, was an exquisite piece of sculpture by Jones himself]*

BOB: Are you going to expand to any other rooms or have it differently organized?

PHIL: It *might* be possible to fit everything on one floor. This year we had everything on the first story with two things on the eighteenth, the top floor. Now that wasn't so bad, because you were always near an elevator. We had to move in the last minute, the very last minute, the week of the convention. We moved to this bigger room, the Grand Ballroom, because it's a tremendous bargain to move there and for a lot of other reasons. Our new room was far from the elevator, remember how you had to take that hike down the staircase to the mezzenine to the elevators? Everybody commented on it. They said that that should be avoided. Nobody was pissed off about it, nobody was hostile about it. The reports on the convention were so fantastically positive that they took that as a small thing. I don't know what's going to go wrong next year, but I'll promise you that something will.

JEFF: Something probably will. Do the fans ever make that much of a problem?

PHIL: Yeah, the fans created one of the two big problems this year. One is a New York problem. I'm not saying that only New Yorkers do it, but it's a problem that happens mostly in New York City. The thieving. The thefts... you talk about a kid running away with a dollar comic book and you say, aw well, the kid was tempted and it's only a kid and it's only a comic book. When a guy loses a medium run of ALL STARS, which anyone would pay two hundred for, that's grand larceny. And I'll tell you very frankly, since this is going to be in a fanzine, perhaps it will get publicity. *[Phil ran over to his shelves, cluttered with boxes of comics and took out from a molding box, a DICK TRACY G-MAN BADGE, upon which he swore:]* When we catch somebody stealing at a convention, I will prosecute, meaning that I would file charges, bring him down to the precinct station, and have a record made out on the kid. Whatever the final decision is, F*CK HIM! *[Slapping his knee]* I HAVE HAD IT! It is no longer a small thing; it is grand larceny. I've seen dealers cry from their loses. I won't have it, I just won't have it.

JEFF. Did you have security guards this year?

PHIL: There were, but any dealer will tell you that if he stands behind the table and a guard is at each corner of his table, and all three of them are staring at the table, that will not eliminate theft. That's not enough. There's a crowd around, and people are putting their books down and picking them up and looking at the books and saying, 'Look at this one, Joe," and passing it to a confederate behind him. There are not many doing this, but there are just a few of these clowns.

Now I'm threatening that I'm going to prosecute, which I will. I want this to be known and I don't care if I have to make examples of *ten kids*. I will. I'm fed up with it after four years. But the worst thing about it is that never, never again, as long as I run a convention, will they be let into one of my conventions. Now if they want to be cut out, that's okay, but they will be cut out. I swear, I won't deal with them personally. And they will not come to the convention, and the convention is worth a thousand dollars even to you, and you're not a dealer.

JEFF: I agree, just the experience alone is worth it.

PHIL: And it gets to be known that you're excluded for that reason

JEFF: Most of the penny ante crimes aren't noticed, the dealers expect it to happen.

PHIL: And I'm not uptight, I'm not an authority figure. People kid me about that because I'm big and my voice is strong. But I'm not hung up on authority, punishment and stuff like that. But I said this already at the convention, so this isn't brand new

At this year's convention there were two thousand. Last year there was a little under that, about 1900. This year there was a little over 2000. Now you figure that occassionally someone will lose a ticket. Alright, we don't care. So if you lose a ticket, we'll replace it. This year, *supposedly*, two hundred people lost their tickets. I don't believe that they lose their tickets. I believe that they gave their tickets to a friend and came back for another one. We finally, defensively, just to cut down the flow, had to say, 'Well, go find your ticket, because we're not letting you in," or 'you have to pay a 50¢ fine, penalty, or whatever you want to call it." And people were outraged that they would have to pay after they had already paid for their tickets. And they should be outraged, except it was not a case of just losing tickets anymore, it really wasn't. It was a case of, Ha, ha, ha! I don't want to pay the 88¢ per day admission. I'd rather steal."

JEFF: Other than thieving, have the fans been much of a bother? There are more fans at a convention than dealers who hassle you about table prices and the like.

PHIL: The fans have been fantastic. The best thing about a convention is the fans. It's a fan gathering, it's always been a fan gathering. It always will be a fan gathering. And that's what it should be as far as I'm concerned. That's why I run it for. I make a profit out of it, so if you want to ask if I run it to make money from it, I would say, "Yeah, I run it to make money." I also run it for the fans. I'm not going to make money if the fans don't come.

JEFF: Well, the fans wouldn't come if you didn't have the dealers, and of course the dealers wouldn't come if the fans weren't there; they couldn't make money.

PHIL: For instance, let me give you an example. Look at the program book. That program book is a knockout.

JEFF: The convention's luncheon this year was quite good I remember that people last year were complaining about the bad food. Were there any last minute goof ups? People leaving, things going wrong, that might make good anecdotes?

PHIL: No, and I attribute that all to myself. *[Smiling leers]* I'm now going to give you the secret to my success that I learned through the years. To all other convention chairmen: Don't lose your cool. Just relax. Almost everybody wants to keep the thing running, and keep the thing going. And when something goes wrong, you just go with it. You talk to people, you listen to people rather than snapping off directions and hostility and stuff like that. And the biggest thing that can go wrong is very easily overcome. The convention just rolls over it. Really, with all the joking aside, I learned that all the anger in the world, all the spitting of fire, all the thunder and lightning are not going to do anything. It's not creative, it's not productive. On the other hand, if someone comes running up to me and screams, 'There are no more *white tickets*, there are no more *white tickets!*", I reply, "Alright, there are no more white tickets. Are there any brown tickets from yesterday? Why don't we use them?" Should he say, "People will say, where are the *white tickets?*", I'll answer, We'll say we lost them.' If you really don't get excited, then people around you won't. You get so much help. Last year, a panel didn't show up, so Neal Adams and a couple of others got up and said, "let's have a panel folk!" And they had some sort of round table discussion. It was beautiful. People keep things going. How many times did we have to change time schedules?

We can provide as much as we can provide if we're not dogmatic about it, if we're not authoritarian about it If we say, Something will go on at 7 o'clock. Later than 7 o'clock and no earlier than 7 o'clock.' Then if a really great guest gets stalled in traffic, we don't have any space to fit him in. If everybody is there early and you can get the panel on earlier than it's scheduled, then fine. If someone else shows up, we can fit him in too. We arrange it on the spot. I guess some people are upset by the constant changes in the schedule, but if you work with what you have and try to get it

in there. Time is just a value anyway. It really isn't a thing, it's a value and you use it in the way you choose. I think that the casualness of the convention is more efficient than structure. The more structure, the less efficient.

BOB: What happened with that problem you had with the hotel? What actually did happen?

PHIL: Since the convention went well, I imagine I made a good decision. I wasn't convinced that I had made a good decision at that time. The hotel called me two weeks before the convention date and told me, "Listen Phil, this is what's happening. A guy who's not working with us anymore *[Laughter]* has done a little thing. He has scheduled another event into the room that you have. And both you and this wedding party have *iron clad guarentees*. You have *perfect contracts*, there's nothing you can do about it." If I didn't move out, I could've stayed there and I don't think that they could've gotten us out and, if they did, I could sue for triple damages. I had a contract. The same thing with the wedding party; they also had a contract. So they said, "Would you consider taking any other rooms? How about last years rooms?" I told them that I had already arranged for 70 tables and the old rooms only hold 60. They were trying to put a gallon into a quart jar. 'Well what else can we do?' I absolutely can't move into smaller quarters. Even thinking about it scares me for all the arrangements have already been made." The dealers already had their directions and everything. If you knew what went into the convention you'd be staggered. Every dealer gets a communication of where to go when he gets to the hotel.

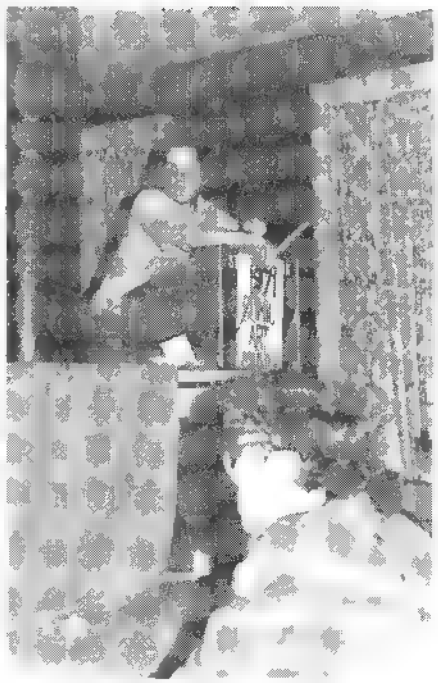
JEFF: Could you give us some statistics? How many people ordered rooms?

PHIL: About a hundred and fifty. No, no. One hundred fifty rooms. That's about two hundred fifty people.

BOB: Anyway, so you were giving dealers directions. What happened to the marriage?

PHIL: I think they got married while the EC Panel was on. *[Laughter]*

PHIL: No, that was *another* marriage, it wasn't the one we were having a conflict with. We didn't have that room, it was theirs. I just changed things there for certain reasons. There was going to be a wedding in one room while in the adjoining room there was going to be an EC Panel with Steranko and a couple of other things. No, it was the Underground Comics Panel. When I found out when the marriage would be held, we scheduled up to the time of the marriage and then afterward. I left my rooms empty because I didn't want a wedding going on while we had a panel. There was no sound proofing, so those at the wedding would've heard everything that was said at the underground Panel. 'Well, we don't say f*ck too often, because it won't be published or, "we got this guy eating this girl in this panel..." and, well, you know. Or like Steranko would say, 'Who do you think I am, Jim Warren?' *[with bellows of laughter from the imaginary audience provided by Phil]* while the wedding is going on. It's another thing. It was just as easy to let that hour go by and let the marriage get out of there, than it was just to run our panels normally. So, why not do it?



BOB: Why are you so nice to the hotel?

PHIL: I described it after the convention during the Gripe and Planning Session. The hotel should be looked on as a monster with claws and fangs and breathes fire, and gives milk and butter and bread and eggs. If you kill the monster, you kill your supply of milk and eggs. If you want the bread and butter you'll learn to avoid the claws, to watch out for the slashing tail, to wear asbestos.

JEFF: Do you have any last minute words for the fans? Anything? Wishing them well or telling them to come on to more conventions of yours?

PHIL: I tell you, I think that they should learn to make their voices heard. I would say this to anybody. Make what they want known. Say what they want. And try to do something about it. For instance, there is a bad comic book dealer, I don't think people have a real right to *complain* about him. I just think that they shouldn't *deal* with him. It's just as simple as that and then he's out of business. If there's a convention somewhere where twenty things are promised, and nothing is delivered, if you go to a convention and find out that your room that was supposed to be $16 will cost you $20, (which happened at one convention,, boller! Certainly don't go to that convention next year. Make it be known, make your work be known. If this isn't there, I'm not going to send my money." You just can't go to every convention. Would you go for five dollars admission, ten dollars?

JEFF: It would depend upon where the con is and what's promised.

PHIL: You've got to let your standards be known. Eventually, there will be someone who will come into the convention business, ready to rip off the money of the convention goers. We had that once. A guy who's a publisher of a lesser known monster magazine ran a convention where he supplies *nothing*, performed *nothing*, nothing went off that was promised, took all the money and told everybody that they had *no right* to complain because they were ungrateful. That's true. Well, this guy could never run a convention again, and that's as it should be. The guy's name is as good as mud. People who have complained about my convention don't complain more than once; the problem doesn't happen again. I read those letters, I listen to them. I have everything taken care of the following year. That's it, let your voices be heard, if you want more professionals, less professionals or whatever. Last year people were saying that we had the same old people on the same old panels. You didn't get that this time. You got to see people you never saw before. Next year it's going to be the same thing.

One suggestion that I picked up from science fiction conventions is having a fan guest of honor. Isn't that something? There are some fans in this thing, for a long, long time. People that should be recognized. They're an interesting bunch, look, you're interviewing me. I've been in fandom for a long time and I'm interested in other fans. So maybe a fan guest of honor would be a good idea. Let people know. Let the people who are running the convention know what you want and what you don't want.

JEFF: One last question. With all the conventions now being held, with the second one already in New York, what's one in Washington, possibly Detroit.

PHIL: Atlanta, San Diego, Dallas, Boston Boston.

JEFF: Do you think that there are too many of them, do you think they'll hurt the NY convention or will yours always stand out?

PHIL: I thought about this and I proposed to a few people about having a calendar for comic book conventions. If anybody wants to have a comicon, it could be cleared with the calendar. I'm glad to see all these conventions. I try to attend as many as I can.

JEFF: And last, some sort of closing statement to the fans reading this?

PHIL: *[Pause]* Something clever, right? Spontaneous and on the spot? *[Pause]* Yes, if everyone would send me just one dollar ... *[Quoting an old Soap, Sales joke that got Soupy thrown off the air, Send no money, bounded out of the room]*

OLD AND RARE COMIC BOOKS AND RELATED MATERIAL

PHIL SEULING
2883 WEST 12 STREET
BROOKLYN NEW YORK 11224

A Word From Our Convention Report Coordinator

What follows after this column is something that a lot of work and sweat has been put into. It took over four months of my free time to put it together; and even then, in Gary's hands, we still had to wait for a few last minute arrivals. My job has been that of editing, correcting, filming, recording and writing the report. Not to mention finding people who would write articles on the various events of the convention.

And of course, my thanks to the people who have written the articles that compose this gargantuan report: Carter Scholz, Michael Catron, Alan Brennert, Bob Zimmerman, Martin Pasko, Carl Gafford, Paul Levitz, Bill Cantey and Bill Wilson. To those who took the photographs (Martin Berkenwald and Gary Groth), an equal share of thanks for their efforts.

And after all that back patting, I'm still not through. A special note of thanks has to be given to Bob Zimmerman who manned the tape recorder as I was at the typewriter, transcribing the many speeches and important facts, a task we spent over 30 hours at. If it wasn't for Bob and his trusty compass (for you see, my lousy tape recorder couldn't wind up the C-120 cassettes that I had used), no doubt this convention report would be coming out sometime in late '72.

The 1971 New York Comic Art Convention was a four day festival at the now-familiar New York Statler Hilton. Due to a mix-up on the part of the hotel, the convention had to share quarters next to a wedding; it was typical for a con, after all, Metro Con '71 found their quarters being used as a beauty contest site. What space the con did have was merely the Grand Ballroom on the second floor and half of the eighteenth floor. One could easily miss the site if one was blind. Truthfully, and without sarcasm, the con area was incredibly large.

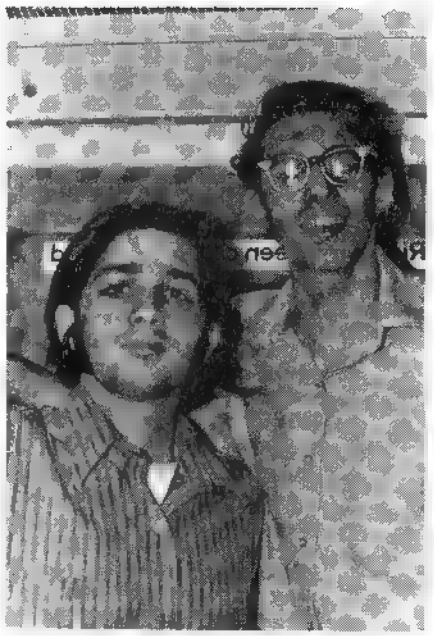
The convention program book featured a cover by Jim Steranko, one of the Guests of honor. Besides the usual articles on the Keynote Speaker and the Guests of Honor and the Luncheon Report, there were advertisements from the comics groups. National used the wrap around cover of DC 100 PAGE SUPER SPECTACULAR 6 (the DC heroes drawn by Neal Adams), as the inside front cover, two page spread. Marvel Comics merely displayed the covers of their upcoming books on the inside back cover, two page spread. Skywald did the same thing on the page previous to Marvel's. The two page centerfold spread had an imaginative cartoon from Warren Publishing. King Features Syndicate also had a one page advertisement somewhere in the last half of the program book. A thirteen page portfolio of art from pros and fans appeared toward the end of the book.

The familiar sound of Phil Seuling yelling as to where pre registered fans and those that needed to register should line up started the ball rolling. The dealers' room opened about fifteen minutes late, the sixty dealers either ready for the crowd or in the final steps of preparation.

At 1:50 in the afternoon, the convention already off schedule, Phil stepped up to the microphone in the Penn Top Room on the eighteenth floor and welcomed the fans to the con. After this; Jim Warren, the publisher of Warren magazines and the con's Keynote Speaker, was handed the microphone and the address began.

Jeffrey H. Wasserman

Report Coordinator; JEFFREY H. WASSERMAN
Assistant; ROBERT ZIMMERMAN
Photographs; MARTIN BERKENWALD & GARY GROTH



OUR STALWART HEROES: Left, Bob Zimmerman right, Jeff Wasserman.

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JAMES WARREN : KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Introduction & Transcription by CARTER SCHOLZ

When James Warren stepped up to the podium to address the 1971 Comic Art convention, he appeared drawn, haggard, more than a bit on edge. In the early parts of the speech, a noticeable tremor occasionally edged its way into his voice. Throughout, heavy sarcasm left a very acrimonious taste in many comments.

But if the president of Warren Publishing company, home of CREEPY, EERIE, and VAMPIRELLA, tended to be a trifle hostile, no one in comics today has a better right. The text of his speech enumerated his position as a businessman, an embattled position in a world where creative talent is heralded as the guiding force, a position made less enviable by a bad business recession in progress.

So if Jim Warren appeared even more caustic than usual towards the fans whom he really deeply appreciates, he can be forgiven that temporary mood of more concentrated cynicism.

He's an interesting character, a hard boiled cynic whose love for comics is necessarily bounded by realistic financial considerations. He's a pragmatist in a world of idealists. It makes for a frustrating situation, one that easily leads to sleepless nights, warren frets, some fans hate him. The pros hate him, other publishers hate him, very seldom is a kind word said about James Warren in fannish circles.

The man is intelligent, competent, intellectually curious. Almost any time he speaks he says something worth quoting. And in the same breath he can say something that makes you want to castrate him. All in all, a querelous bundle of contradictions that seldom gets the credit he deserves for creating and maintaining a niche for nonregulated, high quality (well, sometimes,, black and-white comics in a four color industry. An accomplishment to be envied, considering the scores of competitors that have tried and failed at the same thing.

Some maintain that he is too egotistical, too hard-bitten, even misanthropic. Perhaps sometimes he is brusque and blunt, unwarrantedly [illegible] of CREEPS, EERIE, I AM THE LAW, factions, bomb [illegible] retract it, the [illegible] separate rights, [illegible] tress. A more devoted friend comes not to mind.

Beginning of speech garbled on tape

...I also stand before you as a pro publisher doing business in America today in the year 1971. So, you see, I'm really in a spot that deserves your complete sympathy all the way. I'm highly appreciative, I do, of the honor and the privelege of speaking to this group. Because all of us at Warren Publishing recognize the importance of a group like this and we understand what a tribute it is to address you because you've come to this place not only as fans but as members of a form that doesn't exist anywhere else in the world. And this convention means a lot to us in our company because it's composed of fans and it's not composed of the other parts of the industry that we really don't think too much of.

Last year, the keynote address was given by Neal Adams, a superior artist, the year before it was Gil Kane, another excellent creative man, and both spoke about the present and future condition of comics in America today as seen through their creative background, their creative viewpoint.

Today, now, I want to hold you spellbound with the real reason for the existance of comics. We're going to take a look at the deep, dark, up till now unknown secrets of a creativity of a different nature: the creativity of surviving as a business enterprise in the comics industry. And if you think that's easy, you spend a week with our company. When I finish, I guarantee that nobody here is going to grow up and want to be a comic book publisher. Just as well, because we have too damn much competition as it is.

What does a 35 year old industry consist of? Six seperate and distinct groups, six of them. Listen to this.

First, the creative people. The editors, the artists, the writers, the letterers, the colorers, the production men, the creative team. These are the people who are most popular with the fans, and with the readers. And these are the people whose autographs we usually all want.

Second, the printing plants, the paper mills. We call these the heavy guys.

The third category: The magazine wholesalers and distributors and newsstands and candy stores and drugstores and retail outlets.

Fourth: The readers and the fans. You people. You're number four.

Fifth: The general public. The critics, the Comics Code, the parents, the teachers, the authority people; the ones who know what's good for you and what isn't good for you. *[Laughter]*

And last, the publisher. Me. He's the guy that throws the party for all those other groups. And he's the guy that picks up the tab for that party whether anybody comes or not.

Now. Let's examine what motivates each one of these groups. Let's examine them a little closer.

Take the first one: The creative people. The ones that you're all very familiar with. These are the guys that speak to us

PHOTOS ABOVE: Left and right, Jim Warren delivers Keynote Address to 1971 Comic Art Convention.

Vampirella cover right [illegible]

and address our capacity for delight and wonder. They speak to our sense of mystery and fantasy that surrounds our lives, to our love, to our pity, to our beauty, to our pain, to everything about us. They appeal to our feelings of fellowship and love with all things. This gift belongs to the creative people. They're among the most valuable assets of any publishing company. But at the same time, they're the most unmanageable bunch of egomaniacs who ever breathed air, and the biggest pains in the asses.

Now usually when you hear an artist or writer complain, he's complaining about his publisher. But that does not prove he's really at war with -- took me ten years to find this out -- he's at war with you, dear reader. You're the peculiar animal, the enemy that has to be assaulted and won through the medium of his typewriter or through his pen and ink. The big competition is not between him and me, as a publisher, it's not between him and the other creative people who he competes with; it's between him and the readers. And that's the only measure of his ability to communicate. And that's one of the reasons why most of the time he's tormented. Because he can't get through to you the way he wants to.

Yet so many artists and writers get confused about this. They consider me, the publisher, as their antagonist, when it's really you they should be constantly assaulting with their talent and with their new ideas and with their perfected techniques.

But we've learned to live with this, and we understand it, and the fight goes on, and it goes on twenty four hours a day, and it always will go on, and the people who benefit are you, the readers, eventually. The artist gets ulcers, the publisher goes bankrupt, but you benefit in the long run.

Now, the second group. These are the heavy people. The printing plants

The comics industry is one that depends mainly on discretionary income. Discretionary spending is necessary for its livelihood. It is not like the textbook industry where books are produced no matter what's happening in the economy, because kids always have to go to school, they always have to go to college, and textbooks will always be there. Colleges have to buy them, and if they don't have the money, the government will give them the money. But nobody gives anybody money to buy comic books

We're in the throes now of a very bad business recession. I'm not going to bore you with business facts. We've had recessions before, we're going to continue to have them again. They're a natural consequence of our economic system, which in spite of all its weak points, I still believe is the best for the most people I think it still works the best for the overwhelming majority of our population But while economic conditions are disturbing for most businessmen, they are disastrous, particularly disastrous for printing plants. Printing plants spend millions of dollars in equipment a year or two in advance, and then, when they're hit with cancellations by publishers of magazine titles, these millions of dollars of equipment and these crews that they've hired and trained, are standing by ready to produce, but there's nothing to produce. And when that happens, the printing plant does one of two things; it either gets out of the comic book publishing business and into something else, or it goes bankrupt.

Now, two major comic book producing printing plants have gone out of business in the last five years. You haven't read about them, you haven't heard about them; you read about Lockhead and you read about Rolls-Royce in the headlines, but you don't read about the printing plants *You* don't. *I* do. I read about them. And then I spend a few sleepless nights -- excuse me, I spend not a few, *many* sleepless nights. Now, printers will freeze up when this happens. And they won't commit income or capital or labor or materials for expansion during such a business climate like we have now, and like we've had for the past couple of years And if they don't, publishers face rising costs when they *do* decide to publish, and when they go back to the printer and say, "Okay, Joe, I'm ready now, start the presses," Joe says, "Well, yes, but your press is going to be so many thousands of dollars higher." The publisher looks at this, and he looks at his price, and he looks at his profit, and he decides not to publish a new title for you readers out there.

Y'know, when a publisher goes bankrupt -- *publisher* -- the loss is in the thousands. It's only a few thousand dollars, or a few hundred thousand, or maybe three or four hundred thousand dollars. But when a printing plant goes bankrupt, the loss is in the millions. Many, many millions of dollars And that's why these printing plants, the heavyduty people that we depend on, are being rocked by the economy, and that's why people like myself are holding back on new titles for the most part

Now let's talk about the third group. My favorite. The magazine distributors and wholesalers. *[Laughter]*

This reminds me of Jim Bouton's remark, because the people in our industry refer to these people as the "distributing game." They call it a game because it's too screwed up to be a business. Magazines are still marketed, distributed, and sold exactly the same way that they were a hundred years ago.

Now, you know, there are only two businesses or professions in the *world* that still do business the same way as they did a hundred years ago. Magazine wholesalers and prostitutes. And that's all. *[Laughter]*

Now the fourth category. This is you. The readers and fans.

You people are really something. You're fanatics, you're absolute fanatics. Look, if I told you is Phil Seuling in the house? Phil, are you here? Yeah, he introduces and he runs out on me. *[Laughter]* Alright Tell him this. Tell him this afterwards. If I went up to a normal

person and I said to them, "Phil Seuling just died suddenly," they'd say, "Oh, that's terrible! What a shame!" But if I went up to a comic fan and I said, 'Phil Seuling just died suddenly," he'd say, "Gee, I wonder who's gonna run the comicon next year." *[Laughter. Applause]*

You fans also keep me vomiting continuously with your damn rumors. Always, of course, represented as fact. *Always* represented as fact. You print them in your fanzines, you tell them, you call me up and tell me about them, and it's absolute fact.

If I took a fan, a comic fan, any of you -- put him in jail in solitary confinement for three days with no food, no water, no nothing -- and if at the end of the three days I would say to him, "Take your choice. You can now have food or you can hear the latest unconfirmed comics rumor," he'd say, "The hell with the food. Give me the rumor! Give me the rumor!" *[Laughter]* Take it one step further. I give him this choice: I would say, "Look, you can go free, *or* you can stay in jail *another* three days without food or water, *but* -- not in solitary. During those three days you can roam around the jail and talk to all the other prisoners and repeat the same rumor." He would sure as hell stay in jail, starve for another three days, just to be able to do all this. So much for fans. *[Laughter]*

The fifth group. Another favorite. The general public. The critics. The Comics Code Authority. *[Hisses and boos,*

You can't judge a book by its cover, but some people can't even judge one by its contents. *[Laughter]*

The general public. What the hell do they know about our kind of comics? *[Applause]* They haven't read a comic magazine in 15 or 20 or 30 years. Their idea of comics is Blondie and Dagwood and maybe Dick Tracy.

This fall, dear listeners, we will be treated to a CBS-TV spectacular in full color, in prime time, produced yby Ed Sullivan, titled, "The Comics," portraying well-known comic strip characters. Which ones? Get this: Kerry Drake, Brenda Starr, Rex Morgan, and Major Hoople. *[Laughter]* Isn't that terrific?

When I read about this, I called up on the phone and I talked to somebody pretty high up and I asked him if they'd like to use Vampirella. *[Laughter]* And then this well-informed television vice-president asked me who Vampirella was, and I couldn't stand it, I told him she was the illegitimate daughter of Wonder Woman, and he hung up on me. *[Laughter. Applause]*

Now, the general public. I've been asked to repeat the story I told at last year's comicon about the lady who came up to me and said, "Mr. Warren, why do you only publish horror comics? Why don't you publish *good* books?" And I said, "You mean like the Bible?" And she said, 'Nothing wrong with that." So I spent the next few weeks reading the Bible. I counted 23 murders, 65 assaults with intent to kill, two rapes and one crucifixion.

The Comics Code. Oh, boy. Now don't knock the Comics Code. For years it has stood for everything in America that is decent, and good, and stupid. *[Laughter. Applause]*

Reading from the NEW YORK POST, April 3, 1971. Get this. Big headline:

'COMICS TO JOIN IN DRUG WAR.

"Leonard Darvin, the Code administrator of the Comics Association says that the war against drugs is going to be mentioned in comic books. The proposal, made by Carmine Infantino, editorial director of DC, stipulates that narcotics addiction shall not be presented except as a vicious habit."

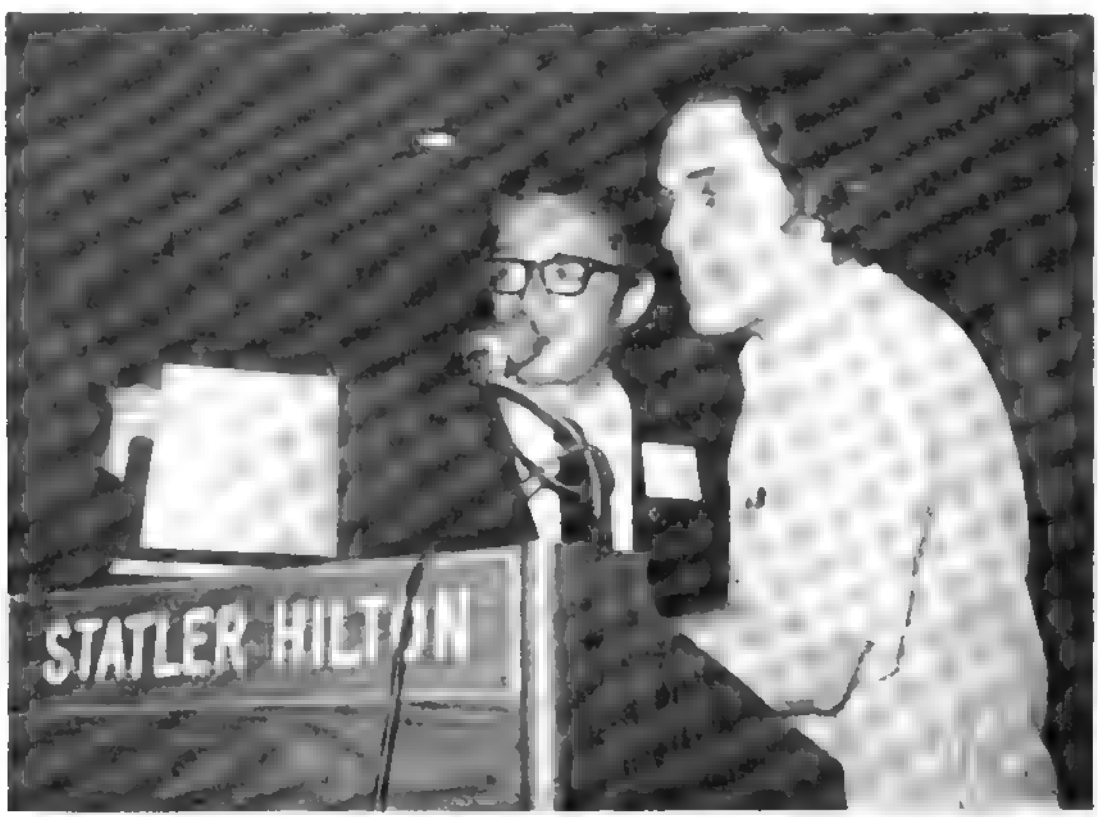
Now get this:

"Leonard Darvin said he believed the proposal stood an excellent chance for passage and any portrayal of narcotics, said Mr. Darvin, would show them to be dangerous and would have to be presented (-- get this --) so as not to present knowledge about drugs." *[Laughter]*

God forbid we should impart knowledge to our readers about drugs! Don't dare tell them anything about it! Their young minds can't handle this hot information! It's not healthy for them to know the difference between a barbiturate or an amphetamine. Handle it the same way they treated sex thirty years ago, with me. Don't tell me about it, don't tell them anything about it until it's too late. *[Laughter]*

The Comics Code. What bullshit. *[Applause]*

In case any of you young readers out there don't know the meaning of that word *[Laughter]*, I suggest you get a copy of a book called SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT by a man named Wertham, and read every page, read every word, cover



Following a question-and-answer session after the speech, convention chairman Phil Seuling presents a plaque "to James Warren for bringing challenge, vitality and new concepts to the publishing of comic art."

to cover, and when you're finished, ladies and gentlemen — *that* is bullshit! *[Applause]*

Now I've been accused of being an irresponsible publisher. I'm a responsible publisher. I'm concerned about my reader's world because it's also my world, and I'm selfish. I want for their world to have more peace, less smog, more fun, less tanks, more freedom for them to be themselves. And yet it seems that the answer proposed by organizations like teachers and the Comics Code is more regimentation, more organization of your young thinking. Get the thinking organized, says the Code and the educational experts. And we'll conquer poverty, disease, and pollution. Maybe. But no one will be wandering his own way with his own thoughts. Now this is upsetting. Because you cannot produce a Mark Twain, a Ray Bradbury, or a Fellini by telling him he can't read my comic books. Not every reader is a budding Ray Bradbury; but then, he *could* be if he isn't stifled and it isn't stifled out of him.

The last category — the publisher. *[Laughter]* It's a wonderful job for people who have never had a nervous breakdown but always wanted one.

Y'know, I get tired of listening to people talk about comics as if they were 100% art form; they're *not!* This is a business; it's tough, hardboiled, unethical — yes, unethical — as any other business. Warren Publishing has a reputation of sorts for doing its competition. Now, that's true; we do. We're in a continual sales war with them, because we do, particularly those who publish black and white comics. We're in a continual 24 hour battle with them. We've earned our battlefield commission in that war, and we've earned it the hard way, those of you who know the history of our company. We don't like our competition; we're not friendly with them. Does Hertz like Avis? Does Crest like Colgate? Does Pepto-Bismol like Alka Seltzer? Of course not.

I had a little talk with Stan Lee recently, genial Stan Lee, All-Star [illegible] Stan — he told me I was wrong to take this attitude. He said, "Jim, you shouldn't do this." He said, "Don't you believe there's room on the newsstands for all of us?" And I said, "Sure, I believe that. I also believe in Santa Claus, the Stork, and the tooth fairy." *[Laughter]*

Now Stan's thinking was okay during the golden age of comics. And up to a few years ago it was okay. Y'know, once comic publishing was a lot of exciting profitable fun. But not now. The economics have narrowed profit margins; staggering costs have been forcing publishers to wonder about their survival. All of them. The big boys — DC Marvel, Gold Key, you name it. The decline of comics was signalled by television and sealed by the supermarkets and the shopping centers and the gradual disappearance of the corner newsstand, the drugstore, and the corner cigar stand. And how do we survive? By utilizing the best talent we can find to work for us. But more than anything else, we'll survive by making constantly correct business decisions, and nothing more.

The smart comics publisher has to know when to develop new publications for new markets and at the same time he has to know when to withdraw when a market is saturated. It's a tough job. I defy any normal human being to live through the agony of waiting for sales reports on the first issue of a new title. Y'know, it's a life and death situation. The current ratio is out of every ten new magazines get this — out of every ten new magazines, *two* of them survive to celebrate their second birthday.

The ones that do survive don't last forever. Our industry is volatile. It's like a seesaw. In 1946, Superman and Batman were among the top best-sellers of all the magazines in the world together. That includes LIFE, TIME, NEWSWEEK, LOOK, everything. In 1948, comics sales were running sixty million copies a month. DC is now selling, by the way, thirty million a year. In 1953, 3-D comics were the rage; remember them? In 1954, the United States Senate had nothing better to do than investigate violence in comic books. Ralph Nader, where were you when we needed you? They didn't investigate General Motors, they didn't investigate the things that they should have, but they investigated violence in comic books. In 1955, the Comics Code Authority put 98 comic titles out of business, and not one of them ever started up again and none of them ever will. In 1961, the ten-cent comic book became twelve cents. In 1963, some guy named Warren published a comic magazine called CREEPY and the Comics Code threatened to run him out of this country. In 1966, Batman appeared on prime TV and every BATMAN magazine that was produced at the printing plant sold out. In 1968, Vampirella was born, and people started calling me a dirty old man. *[Laughter]*

In the final analysis, let me tell you that I love my company and I love the characters we've created, Creepy, Eerie, Vampirella, and I love my work. And we're both here today because of a unique love story. You, you're here because of the pure love that you have for the subject of comics. I'm here because of my personal love for comics, and for my readers and for creating a good product. And that's some love affair.

Now, what can you say about a 35 year-old industry that's sick and maybe dying? Well, when a few thousand fans show up each year at a comic convention like this it's a good sign that the patient may recover and live another 35 years. And guys like old Dr. Warren, tired and weary and wracked with pain, will be encouraged by this, and we'll work even harder to make the patient stronger, and healthier again.

Thank you.

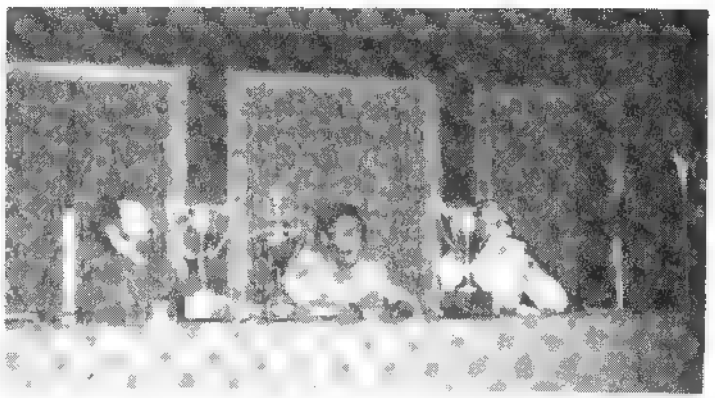
[Loud applause]

"EERIE" copyright © 1972 Warren Publishing
"FAN" GROTH copyright © 1972 Jay Jay Groth

THE WARREN AWARDS

AWARD CEREMONY & PRESENTATION

Report by MIKE CATRON



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT. Nick Cuti, Billy Graham, Archie Goodwin; James Warren speaking at podium.

What is the purpose of an awards ceremony? Sure, sure, we all know the idea is to honor those individuals who have scored some outstanding achievement in their particular field of endeavor. But an awards ceremony also functions as a promotion gimmick for whatever organization sponsors the affair.

Honoring those outstanding people is a great way to get some free publicity. The movie industry gets a lot of attention just before the Oscars are awarded. Television gets loads of "who's-not-gonna-be-this year?" press space prior to the Emmys.

ACBA uses the Shazams to promote the comics industry. And Jim Warren uses the Warren Awards to promote Warren Publications. It's great Public Relations. Besides, it *does* give those outstanding talents a chance to receive some well-deserved recognition for their work.

With that in mind, how well did the 1971 Warren Awards fulfill their purpose? I'm sure that anyone who was present in the Penn Top Room South last July second would agree that the Warren Awards certainly served their purpose as publicity for Warren Publications.

But how well did it honor the five trophy winners? Obviously, they were the center of attention when the awards were announced and during the question and answer session that immediately followed. But, as with most panel discussions, speeches and other such events, the last impression one receives is the most enduring.

The last impression I (and presumably most other attendees) got from the 1971 Warren Awards was not a good one. Warren deliberately ended the question and answer session on a sour note by dragging out (in front of close to 1,000 fans by his own estimate) some of the seamier aspects of magazine publishing. This would have been best left to another time when the revelations would not have detracted from the honors being paid Warren's own outstanding artists and writers. But more on that later.

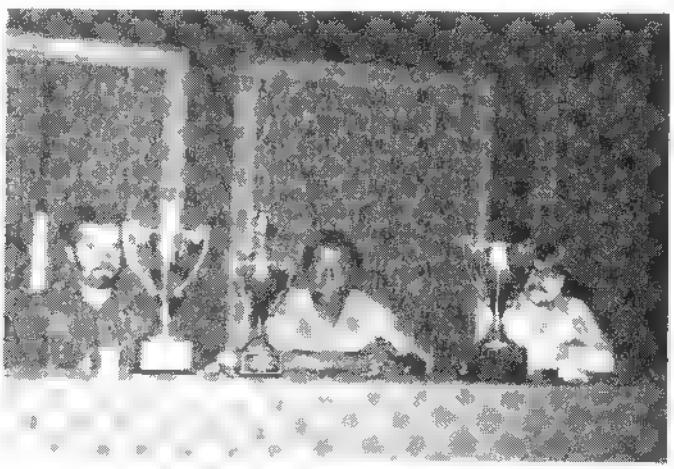
The Warren Awards followed the keynote speech (covered in the preceeding article by Carter Scholz) and, since Jim Warren happened to be the keynote speaker he was able to begin the awards ceremony almost immediately upon the conclusion of his speech.

Following the precedent he set last year, Warren began by introducing from the audience many of the people who work for Warren Publications (and several who don't). Inevitably each introduction was accompanied by a pre-selected insult for each pro. Some of the insults were genuinely funny, such as the one about Billy Graham ("On a list of the ten best artists in America, Billy would have to rank eleventh") and the "real reason" Marv Wolfman got married ("He had to. He was pregnant.")

But one insult in particular seemed out of place and downright nasty. Warren introduced Berni Wrightson (who, by the way, wasn't even present, and doesn't work for Warren because he doesn't want to) and said that Berni doesn't work for him because he isn't good enough," pointing to Berni's strip in CASTLE OF FRANKLNSTEIN # 17 - "A Case of Conscience" -- as proof of his statement that Berni wasn't 'good enough to work for Warren Publications.' Mr. Warren, obviously counted on the fact that most fans in attendance either did not see the story in question, or thought that it was one of Berni's recent stories and that "Wrightson is slipping." Not true. 'A Case of Conscience" was drawn over four years ago, and Berni was paid $5 per page for it. I thought this below the belt attack on one of the comics' finest illustrators was totally uncalled for and in very poor taste. *[Editor's Note: And I daresay, Berni is good enough to work for any comic book company today which a quick look at his full page EC drawing in this issue would quickly prove.]*

Introductions over, Warren picked up the first trophy, a silver cup, and removed the paper that concealed the inscription.

LEFT, Mark Hanerfeld; RIGHT: T. Casey Brennan



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Nick Cuti, Billy Graham, Archie Goodwin

"In recognition of his creative excellence as an artist and a writer in the field of comic art, this cup is awarded, for last year's work in our publications, to Mr. Wallace Wood." Amid the applause that ensued, Warren managed to say that Nick Cuti would be accepting the award for the absent Mr. Wood.

Next, the Ray Bradbury Cup was given to T. Casey Brennan. The award was for the excellent 'On The Wings of a Bird" which appeared in CREEPY # 36. Brennan modestly accepted the trophy and took his seat on the dais.

The Frank Frazetta Cup, for the best inside artwork, was awarded to Jose Gonzales for his first work on the VAMPIRELLA series, "Death's Dark Angel," published in VAMPIRELLA # 12. Bill Graham was present to accept the cup for Mr. Gonzales, who was in Barcelona, Spain. Graham added a unique touch to the event by reading a short acceptance speech in Spanish. Although I doubt if many of those present understood the language, the speech ended with two words everyone could understand, "gracias amigos."

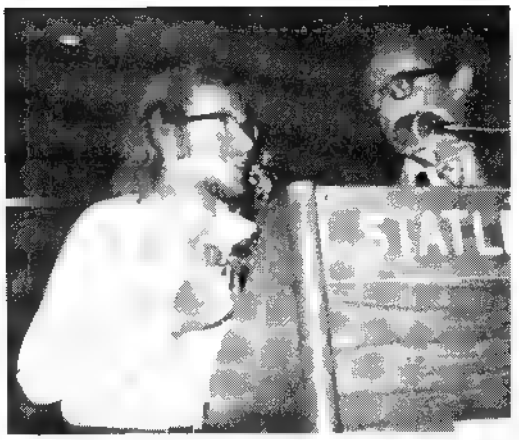
For the second year in a row, Frank Frazetta was awarded the Jack Davis Cup (named after the cover artist of CREEPY # 1) for the best cover on a Warren magazine. The award winning cover appeared on VAMPIRELLA # 7 and although Frazetta did show up later during the convention, Mark Hanerfeld accepted the trophy in his absence.

The final award of the day, a silver cup for the all-around best writer at Warren Publications, was given to eight-year Warren veteran, Archie Goodwin for his work on the VAMPIRELLA series.

There followed a question and answer session with emcee Warren and panel members Mark Hanerfeld, T. Casey Brennan, Nick Cuti, Billy Graham, and Archie Goodwin.

Things were going fine, with questions on the future of Warren Publications, (the new Warren publication Wally Wood is editing "will be sold only to readers eighteen and over and two issues would hit the stands before next year's con"), how the panel felt about artists writing their own stories and even a comment about the sadness of the passing of BLAZING COMBAT. But, when a fan asked, "What happened to the first issue of EERIE?"

Archie Goodwin giving acceptance speech.



LEFT PHOTO: T. Casey Brennan steps down from the dias, with his plaque, which read, "To T. Casey Brennan, winner of the Ray Bradbury Cup, for Best Story, 'On The Wings of a Bird' - CREEPY # 36." RIGHT PHOTO. Jim Warren hands T. Casey his award.

(the question is almost an annual event in itself, it seems) things started to turn sour.

Warren told of beating a rival publisher to the stands in order to secure the rights to the name "Eerie." He used the tale as an example of how sordid and corrupt the publishing industry is and proceeded to relate a more recent equally distasteful incident:

"One of the big three comic book publishing companies, and it was either DC or Marvel, or you name the other one, it doesn't matter but one of those, sits with me on a board of directors of the publishers' association. And this clown got up a survey that cost our association eight thousand dollars, for our magazines to better our marketing and better our distribution. And the survey was to be sent to 50 *select* wholesalers -- *eight* thousand dollars worth of a survey. And we paid for that -- our entire association.

"I went to Europe last March. And while I was there, this clown *deliberately omitted my titles from that survey*. Yeah. He said it was a mistake.'

[Unfortunately, at this point, a few seconds of Warren's talk was lost on the tape] '...better change it and correct it and he said, 'okay, we will' and he never did. And so that survey went out with all of his magazines and none of mine. And when I found out about it - I got back from Europe - I naturally, was a little peeved and I sent this bastard a letter and he apologized profusely -- took four pages to tell me that he was awfully sorry. But the damage had been done. It wasn't any great victory to have him pick up our share of the eight thousand dollars... [again, a few seconds were lost] .. but that's the kind of world we live in.

"I don't want to mention any names, but the guy who did that is called MARVEL COMICS. Any other questions?

[Silence,

"All right, I think we ought to call it quits, unless you have some questions for some people up here." *[More silence]*

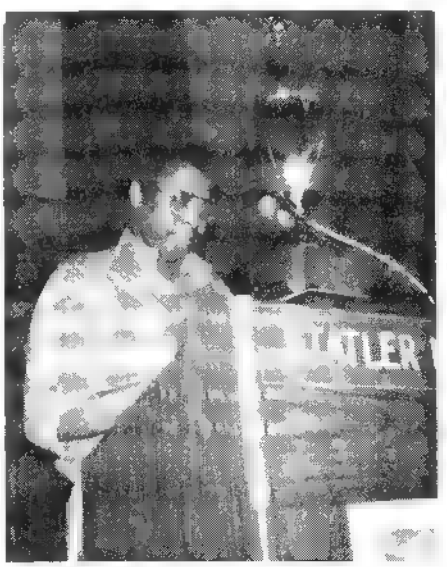
"All right, see you all tomorrow. Enjoy yourselves. Have a nice evening.'

[Applause]

So ended the 1971 Warren Awards. For the most part, I had enjoyed the event up until Warren so graphically depicted how dishonorable the industry was and yet made himself appear as a lily white innocent forced to play this game with those mean old nasty men.

Admittedly, questions from the audience might have been a little scarce due to the fact that only two of the five award winners were actually present to be asked anything. So, much of the responsibility for an interesting panel fell on Warren's shoulders. But Warren didn't go into the survey story by accident. He's too good of a public speaker for that. No, it was the slur on all of MARVEL COMICS, instead of the man who allegedly cheated Warren, Martin Goodman.

I was glad to see Wood, Brennan, Goodwin, Gonzales, and Frazetta honored for their fine work in the past year. But I was appalled at the grandstanding play by a man who decried the unscrupulous of others and yet was equally unscrupulous by telling such a tale solely to gain publicity for his own publications. It left a bad taste in my mouth.



Billy Graham giving Jose Gonzalez' acceptance speech in Spanish.

film showing

Revue by ALAN BRENNERT

With echoes of last year's disastrous filmic fiasco still ringing in our ears, the convention members passed into the Sky Top Room with vague hopes that at least *this* year we would not be subjected to commercial trailers and similar inanities. We were not; in fact, this year's film showing proved to be one of the finest ever presented at *any* convention.

The keynote was variety and novelty, albeit starting off traditionally enough with the mandatory serial chapters: Chapter One of Republic's DICK TRACY and Chapter Twelve of Universal's FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE. Nostalgia was the byword here, whether marvelling over the ineptitude of Ralph Byrd's acting, or revelling in the dynamic action that only Buster Crabbe could afford, nostalgia and the smallest hint of derisive laughter.

The third film was strictly for *intentional* laughs. The long-awaited STAR IRE bloopers reel was sped in by special messenger and turned out to be everything expected of it. More a cleverly-constructed spoof film than a reel of actual outtakes it nevertheless abounded in scenes of Shatner, Nimoy, Kelley, *et al*, blowing takes, delivering off-hand remarks oncamera, and generally having one hell of a time. Each resulted in a tumult of laughter from the audience, quickly hushed as soon as the next flashed on the screen. Marvelous.

Back to the movie trailers; but with a difference! While last year we were 'treated" to bland, black and white trivia, this year we savored the color, the artistry, the pure pleasure, of clips from such Disney triumphs as SNOW WHITE and FANTASIA - accent on the latter. Including the Bela Lugosi - styled Devil, you've all heard about.

Fifth, by request of Phil Seuling, "a film by Samuel R. Delany" was shown. Described by Steinbrunner (who had not seen it either) as *experimental*, that is perhaps the most euphemistically pleasing word possible. Delany has gone far beyond the New Wave in this atrocity, which pardonable for the sin of being ambiguous and silly, is just too unforgivingly dull. Notables such as Berni Wrightson and George Alec Effiger made their film debuts in this muddled, allegedly SF story in the nude, produced by Barbara Wise. At one point in the banalities, the naked Wrightson strides over the floor stationed camera, thereby providing convention members with the running joke of the evening: "Tomorrow, crotch shots of Berni Wrightson will be available in the dealers room." The real pity of it all: it lasted more than twenty minutes.

Next came another experimental film, this one produced by Richard Corben of NEVERWHERE fame. The difference was startling. Brought to the con by Vaughn Bode, it was in actuality a series of truly experimental special effects, gorgeous to behold and intricate in detail. A planet, obscuring the sun but wrapped in a golden corona of its own; a scarlet spaceship flying through black space. When the lights went on, the audience was speechless, and rightly so. Stanley Kubrick would have turned green. Barbara Wise would have turned green.

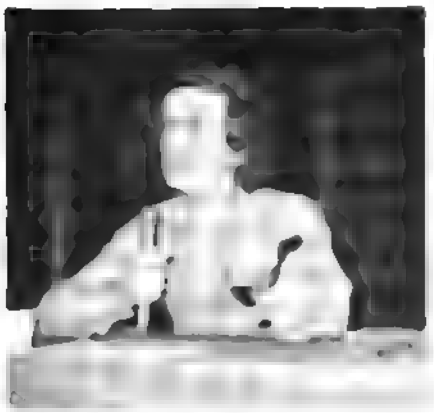
Then, in honor of the visiting Kirk Alyn (the screen's first live action Superman, his first chapter of Columbia's 1952 BLACKHAWK serial was shown. The dialogue was just too crafty to believe, and the plot (replete with long-lost-twin-brother and vicious-commie agents out to get America) looked like something out of a Lorenzo Semple nightmare. The acting was, Kirk was no better, ranging from static to "he *must* be putting us on," but again, it was so bad, it was good.

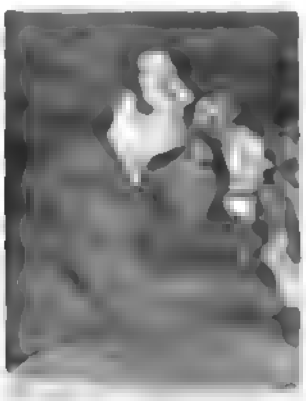
The last event of the evening was also the *best* event of the evening. As advertised, three of the Dave Fleischer/Paramount SUPERMAN cartoons of the '40's were shown (in black and white, unfortunately) featuring the rousing voice of Bud Collyer. There was no laughing at this. The episodes shown, "The Bulleteers," "The Twelth Hour," and Jungle Drums, rank with some of the finest animation ever shot. The use of shadow was absolutely inspired, the direction flawless, the scripts intelligent and sympathetic. Every entry was greeted with enthusiastic applause. We could only have asked for more of the same.

And when it was over, and as Chris Steinbrunner started the process of packing up his film cans and retiring back to WOR-TV there was time to contemplate one burning question; "What could he *possibly* do for an encore?"

SUM'THIN' FISHY...
?
PATOOIE!
ROAR!
GNARF!
GNARF? GNARF!
CHOMP!
UMP!
FIN.

"DON'T KICK SUPERHEROES WHEN THEY'RE DOWN!"





Goethe Award Presentation

Report by CARL GAFFORD

Dwight Decker *Tony Isabella*

The first annual presentation of the Goethe Awards was delayed three quarters of an hour due to the deluge of art hungry fans on Neal Adams at the conclusion of the Pro Panel. When the presentation finally got underway, Phil Seuling introduced the Awards presenters Dwight Decker and Tony Isabella and briefly explained the Goethes.

The Goethe Award (pronounced Ger-ta) was named by Don & Maggie Thompson after the first Big Name Comics Fan. It was this critic and author who encouraged Rudolphe Topper in 1831 to further the pioneering of comic art. The awards themselves consist of a Tim Kirk illustration bearing the name of the winner. Unfortunately, difficulties with the printer prevented the Award Sheets from being available in time for the presentation. As a result, this year's winners were presented "handshakes and smiles" from Dwight, Tony and pro presenter Jim Steranko; the awards sheets to be mailed to the winners later. (Incidentally, "Goethe" does not appear on the award sheets. Don & Maggie leave the name of the award still open to suggestion).

Tony Isabella started the presentation with a remark aimed at Jim Steranko, who had failed to appear to aid Dwight and Tony in presenting the awards. 'Thanks, you bastard." The remark turned out to be unnecessary since Jim turned up fifteen minutes later. In true Steranko fashion, Jim had merely missed the deadline.

The ten categories were presented briskly. So briskly in fact that the con was put back on schedule at the end of the awards, making up for the Adams delay.

Those winners who were not present, had their awards accepted for them by others. Such was the case with Jan Strnad who had won "Favorite Fan Writer." Dwight accepted Jan's handshake and smile for him. Both Dwight and Tony had been nominated for the award along with Jan. Tony, who lost the award by one vote, was quick to point out that Dwight ranked fifth and last in the vote; behind "No Award."

Neal Adams accepted the "Favorite Comic Book Character" Award for Deadman, attributing that character's great appeal (unfortunately not extending to sales) to Carmine Infantino and the late Jack Miller, who had created the earthbound avenging spirit.

Roy Thomas was not present to accept his "Favorite Pro Writer" Award, but fellow-winner Denny O'Neil was (the vote for this award had resulted in a tie between the two). Neal Adams won "Favorite Pro Artist" and Dick Giordano won "Favorite Pro Editor." Dick commented on how ironic it was to be presented a "Favorite Editor' Award so shortly after leaving the editor's desk.

The fan section of the presentation was completed with Robert Kline as "Favorite Fan Artist" (Gary Groth accepted Robert's handshake & smile), CAPTAIN GEORGE PRESENTS as "Favorite Underground Comic" (Tom Robe accepted for Captain George), and NEWFANGLES as "Favorite Fanzine" (Tony Isabella accepted this one for Don & Maggie Thompson).

The climax came when Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams rose to accept awards for GREEN LANTERN as "Favorite Pro Comic-Book" (they had already won "Favorite Comic Book Story" for GL # 76's "No Evil Shall Escape My Sight"). They received their handshakes from Dwight wearing puppets of his two heroes: Trickie Dicky and Spiral Agnew (these puppets were available from NATIONAL LAMPOON). Dwight gave a brief speech to Denny and Neal in mono-tone Nixonese, "I just want to say that you have misjudged my administration very much. After all, I am very much against pollution. I want to make America perfectly clear."

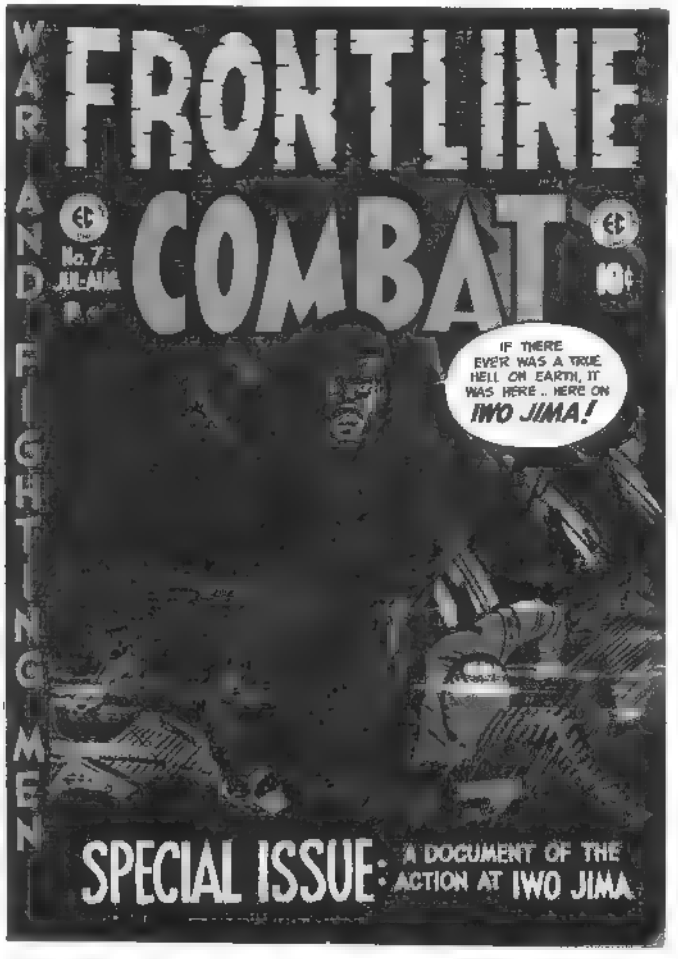
"If anyone thinks we're going to follow that act, they're out of their minds," remarked Neal.

Following the presentation was a short question and answer period.

Don & Maggie report that next year's Awards Presentation (WITH the Tim Kirk award sheets) will be done on a much larger scale. Distribution of both the nominating and final ballots will be spearheaded by major dealers like Phil Seuling and Captain George and large circulation 'zines like THE BUYER'S GUIDE and RBCC. A later deadline of June 1st for the final ballot will be used in place of this year's March list deadline to allow more time for distribution and voting. The results will be kept secret until the presentation at the con.

LEFT TO RIGHT Dwight Decker, Jim Steranko, Neal Adams, Tony Isabella

HARVEY KURTZMAN


WAR AND FIGHTING MEN
FRONTLINE COMBAT
EC
No. 7
10¢
IF THERE EVER WAS A TRUE HELL ON EARTH, IT WAS HERE .. HERE ON IWO JIMA!
SPECIAL ISSUE: A DOCUMENT OF THE ACTION AT IWO JIMA

"HARVEY KURTZMAN. A talk by one of the authentic masters in the field, who has created such wondrous and divergent pieces of work as FRONTLINE COMBAT and Little Annie Fanny." --- 1971 Comic Art Convention Program Book.

Report by PAUL LEVITZ

The Kurtzman event was billed as a "talk" on the program, but quickly turned into a question and answer session. After thanking everyone for the pleasure of being there, Mr. Kurtzman revealed that his true joy of the convention would be the selling of his bundles of HUMBUG, amounting to about *5,000 copies!* Later in the session, when questions were pressed about those self-same bundles, he began to consider actually bringing them next year

The question session began on a no-holds barred note. Actually, there were *some* forbidden topics as he explained in the beginning:

"Don't ask me what 'potzrebie' means; don't ask me where the 'What me worry?' kid came from; don't ask me who models for Annie Fanny; or what Hefner is like (I only discuss Easter bunnies)." And then the barrage of questions began.

The topics ranged over his past, present and future works as well as several things that he had no direct connection with. His present work on Annie Fanny was discussed in detail; the degree of work he does (layout-type), how the others are concerned with the strip, and what Hefner does with all the artwork. According to Harvey, it is hoarded and later re-used. He also said that he wanted to do other things, but that he had no time at the present. Another facet of his present work is his book of the history of the comics, to be entitled, THE HISTORY OF THE COMICS. When asked about the book in relation to the ESQUIRE article by him of the same name, he said that they have entirely different formats. His piece appeared in the June, 1971 issue of ESQUIRE. It was basically eight pages of reprints which spanned the life of comics. Harvey mentioned that he was hoping for his book to appear this fall.

His past was very lightly touched upon, principally in a discussion about the origin of MAD. Kurtzman said that he wanted to start a magazine at that time that he "could write without leaving the room." The amount of research involved in his various other books was beginning to get to him. The answer was MAD.

His future works were discussed in connection with the underground comics field. The discussion opened when someone in the audience asked about some underground work he had done. Kurtzman was astonished when anyone had recognized his touch because the work in question had been done at a jam session, where, as he put it, "ten guys are working on one piece of paper." He said that he would like to work for the underground field, calling it a new frontier, but he felt that it would be hard, and both timely and financially unprofitable (although he said he heard that the situation was improving with respect to money).

One of the things that he went into that didn't directly concern him was Freudian symbolism and connotations of some strips. He got a special joy out of talking about Flash Gordon. According to Harvey, the situation was perenially thus: Flash fighting all varieties of monsters and villains with a *sword* when there is a perfectly good *blaster* at his hip that he could *zap* them all from a safe distance. "Why are they fencing in jock straps?"

"Why is Dale always dressed wearing something that looks like it's out of burlesk?" This brought quite a lot of laughter and applause.

Urged on by the crowd, Harvey related the story about an old Willie Elder escapade. "He used to be a crazy lunatic, once upon a time. I'm tempted to go into Will Elder stories like I did at Milwaukee. You know, I think you've asked enough questions, so I'll go into this crazy story about Willie that I told in Milwaukee.

"Will, when we went to high school together, was an absolute lunatic. Very often, I'd see him in the lunchroom's telephone booth with a trickle of ketchup running down the side of his chin. He'd be a fighter pilot going down with the plane. He was always carrying on.

"We'd go into a restaurant and he'd eat his meal, come out to pay the cashier and open his wallet which would be filled with real lettuce." The audience chuckled but quickly quieted down as Kurtzman said "My favorite story is about him in the army. He and a buddy of his would fill a hot water bag with goulash. They would go to a bar and on a given signal, Will's friend would throw up the goulash all over the bar." Here the crowd made a lot of wry faces with sounds to match. "And Will would start eating it!" This could only have been the highpoint of the con. With the fans applauding and laughing, Harvey thanks the audience for having him and left the stage amidst more applause.

Pushing This Book Really Is 'A Job For SUPERMAN'!

Report by MARTIN PASKO

Not since Liz Carpenter toured the country in her "Lizmobile," pushing her book about her antics as press secretary to Lady Bird Johnson, has there been a more bizarre circuit for a book-plugging author to travel: The comic convention circuit. Aging, but rosy-cheeked, peddling nostalgia and looking rather like a Brooks Brothers Buffalo Bob Smith in a discreetly fashionable gray suit, Kirk Alyn, "star" of an all-but-forgotten 1948 movie serial named "SUPERMAN," stepped up onto the podium at 11 AM Sunday morning, direct from his much-heralded engagement at the D-Con in Dallas.

He beamed his still-handsome matinee idol smile at an audience that was an odd combination of dewy-eyed ex-children, whose memories of their favorite Saturday afternoon thrill were still quite vivid, and the curious, gawking fans, who turned out to see the freak from the red and blue suit they once marveiled at in a dog eared copy of SCREEN THRILLS ILLUSTRATED. This was the big moment for Alyn, whose book, A JOB FOR SUPERMAN, is published in softcover by Alyn himself; because it is too crudely written to be distributed by a legitimate publisher. This was the crowning moment; the biggest comicon of them all! Alyn's five month tour had carried him from Disneyland to Fun City, recalling the same tired anecdotes (suggesting the range of his memory) but never tiring himself; and at the same time employing some latent acting talent left after some 23 years since first donning "The Uniform," as Columbia called it.

A hush fell on the small group of the curious assembled in the Penn Top room as promoter Seuling and guest-speaker Alyn entered. Seuling, looking appropriately awed, took his place on the podium, behind which stood a large color cutout of the famous, early Wayne Boring rendition of Superman, intended as a fitting backdrop for his flesh-and-blood's 45-minute oral memoirs.

"DC sent these... cutouts," remarked Seuling, by way of introduction. "I didn't even know they were going to do it; it was amazing to me that they showed up.

"I started seeing serials when I was, oh, I'd say 12... 11," sighed Seuling, suddenly waxing nostalgia as he began his introduction, "and the thing I remember most about all the serials I saw was that I once swallowed the money that I had for the movies... I was carrying it in my mouth; I guess I didn't have pockets... eventually I got it back." Seuling leers, and there is laughter.

"What picture was it you were going to see?" called out the eager Alyn, waiting on the sidelines for Seuling to get to the point, and hoping to help him get there.

"I can probably tell you..." stammers Seuling. "It was something about G-Men; where it was probably any one of six guys; and you had to wait fifteen chapters; and one-by-one they got killed." Seuling never did mention the title of the serial, a telling testament to the forgettable nature of almost all of the cheap studio "chapter plays" of those halcyon days.

His story about the money was an amusing anecdote, but had nothing to do with the reason everyone was there that morning. He inadvertantly struck a keynote in so doing, however because neither did anything Alyn had to say bear any relation to what convention going is all about.

But when Seuling got down to brass tacks. His comments about what it's like to see a favorite comic book hero personified on the screen, he struck a core of a profound experience. "...it was so dramatic to me it was like a shaking experience. You *know* what comic books are; they're not part of your life, they *are* your life. They're part of your experience; they're not seperated from it. You *are* what you read, what you see, whatever impinges on your consciousness; and comic books were part of who I was. And there they were, on the screen. When I met Kirk Alyn at this convention, I felt... well, I felt the same way as when I met Hal Foster, and I feel that way now." Seuling continues growing maudlin. "My life is taking an extra dimension that I never expected it would take. I'm really delighted that I met the legend, the star, the serial character. And it's been a very great pleasure to get to know the *man*... Kirk Alyn."

Alyn began his talk properly humble, with a "shucks, ma'am" sense of wonder at the nice folks he met. "I would like to say that this is only my second [?] convention," Alyn began, "and until I came to a convention, I never knew there was such a thing, especially this New York convention. It's the *biggest thing* and the most *wonderful thing I've ever seen*. I've met *so many* nice people and it seems that comic book collectors have something in common that very few other people in life have." Speaking extemporaneously, Alyn betrayed a rather simplistic outlook on life throughout his little speech. "They'll never suffer from some of the things that people who don't have hobbies suffer from. The comic books not only bring back a nostalgia for those who've seen these things earlier," he continued, as if comic books were dead, "but the younger folks seem to enjoy them *just as much*. Being downstairs selling the book, I have met *so many darn nice people*, I'm afraid I'm hooked. I'm gonna become a collector myself. I didn't even collect my own stills, so when I did the book, I had to go borrow 'em from people that were collectors

Though Alyn possessed an artichoke's gift of transition, he had a pleasant manner and a good stage prescence which made his anecdotes a little bit more bearable despite their corn. "I've had many questions asked, in fan letters and downstairs, *[such as]* 'What pictures did you have the most fun in?' and 'What picture did you like to do most?' and 'What stu-

dio did you like to work best in?' Well, I can only say that after you've done SUPERMAN, the rest of 'em don't seem like *anything at all*.

"I made five serials before I made SUPERMAN, which were G-MAN serials, and I had a lot of fun in those, and in those pictures. I always had a double or what we call a stunt-man, who did all the *dirty-work* for me. But when I did SUPERMAN, I did all my own stunts. We had no double. It's funny that psychologically, during the filming of SUPERMAN, the director *[Spencer Gordon Bennett]* and everybody on the set, including myself, would be given to think I was really Superman, once I was in that uniform, all day long." It is a point much elaborated on in Alyn's book almost to the point of repetition.

"There were a lot of fire scenes, and of course, I was always rescuing people. In SUPERMAN, I didn't fight with the fists, as I did in G-MEN, FEDERAL AGENTS and all those other things I did, because Superman is so powerful that if he hit anybody it'd be the end. All I did was gently knock their heads together, and that'd be enough.

"I was always out on a rescue... Poor Lois Lane *[Noel Neill, who Forest Ackerman once said that she had been tied up during her career "more times than a Chinese laundry"]* was always being tied up gagged and the very first day of shooting we went out on location." Alyn tells the long, pointless and only slightly amusing tale of his encounter with a fast-moving train while the cameras photographed the illusion of Superman bending a crooked rail back into place. It is a story told much better in the book.

Also told better in the book is the story of how Alyn flew in the film. To the question, "Did you use wires?" Alyn said that he always has to answer, "'Yes and no.' It seems that the special effects men had convinced the producer that they could put me on wires, and they would opaque the wires and light them in such a manner that when they were photographed you wouldn't see them... They made a plaster cast of my torso... they made a metal breast plate which I put on underneath my uniform, then they hooked the wires onto that, so you couldn't see the wires pulling on the costume. They raised me about fifteen feet above the floor... but they didn't make any provisions for my legs, just my torso. ...'Hold your legs up, Kirk! *Hold 'em up!*' That's all I kept hearing, and my stomach muscles began to hurt. Did you ever lie on a table and try to lift your legs up like this two or three times? Your stomach muscles begin to hurt. But I did this for about ten hours up there! I was alongside a plane. It seems there was a bomb planted on the wing and I was supposed to fly up, get the bomb, throw it away, and it landed in the lake about ten miles away, and exploded like an atomic bomb. In order to give the audience the illusion I was moving in space, they had to have clouds go by me. So they had a smoke pot in front of me, and behind it was a fan, blowing the smoke, so it looked like there was clouds going by. But in this case, it seems like they had the fan too close to the smoke pot... and a whole lot of sparks came out of the smoke pot..." The fan blew the sparks down into Alyn's costume, where they became lodged between his breastplate and him. Beating the plate to put out the "fire" was useless, because of the metal, so "I screamed bloody murder up there. I said, 'Let me down outta here! I'm on fire!' So they let me down as quickly as they could - about fifteen minutes -" There is laughter. "...and they got a pitcher of water and poured it down in there. It was incidents like this that had me ready to quit at any minute, but you already have some film in the can, so you can't quit..."

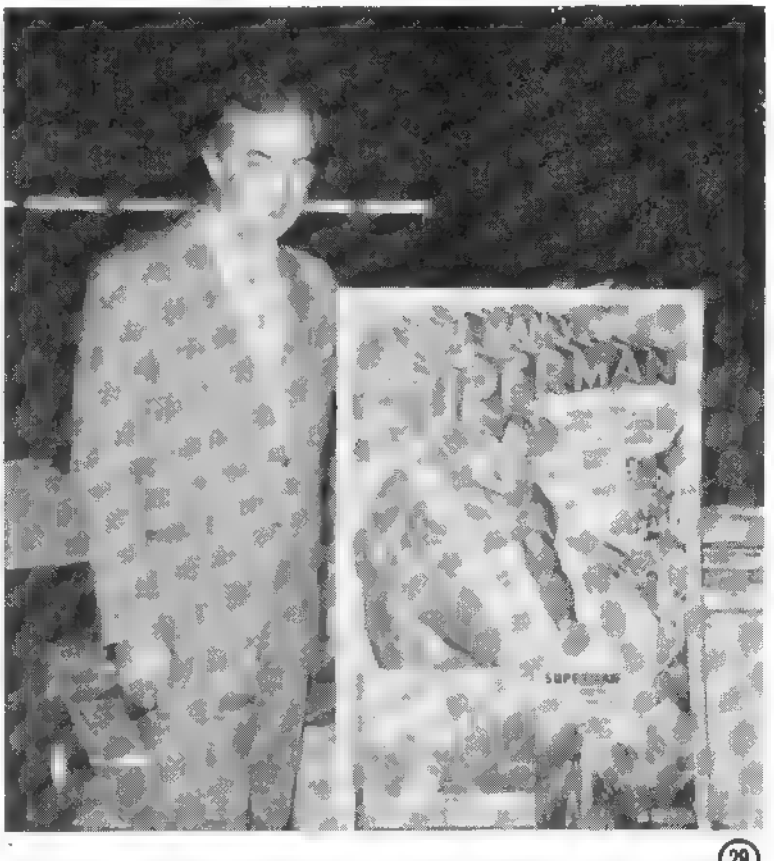
However, his labors and his agony were almost all in vain. "The last day we worked *twelve hours* doing those wires scenes, and the next day, they went in to see the rushes, and...the wires stood out so beautifully, you could see every wire! The producer *["Jungle Sam" Katzman]* said in the loudest voice he could muster, 'You're all fired! Get out!' He fired everybody, including the cameraman, the special effects man; everybody. We went to a special effects studio, where they had a camera mounted on gimbals." They shot the scene with Alyn standing vertically, and the camera was turned on its side. When Alyn as Superman "took off," he leaped over a camera mounted on a high hat; and animation was used in the long shots of Superman flying off into the distance.

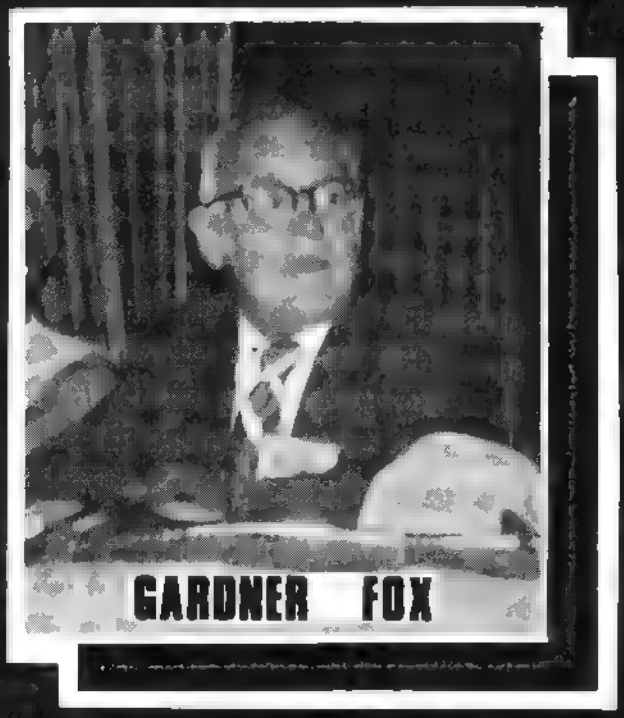
Alyn related two other incidents (also in the book). One is about a stray lightning bolt in a scene involving a mad scientist's electrical equipment which was attracted by the metal buckle on the belt of the Superman costume, striking and frightening Alyn, who was saved only by the rubber soles of his "super boots." The other concerned a scene in which Alyn was to carry the stricken reporters, Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen (Tommy Pond, whose character Alyn insists upon mispelling in his book as "Jimmie Olson"), out of a burning building, each under one arm. Noel Neill at 110 pounds and Bond weighing in at 140 came to a staggering 250 pounds, which began to feel like *tons* around the fifth take. As the rushes revealed Alyn straining under the massive load, he was asked why he struggled so. It was then that director Bennett shamefacedly informed Alyn that the scene was intended to have been shot with dummies, not the live actors.

One fan aptly described A JOB FOR SUPERMAN, on sale at the convention for $4.50, as "very light reading." It is obviously intended for children, has a bad sense of organization (chapters seem to run into one another, making it difficult to tell what's chapter-heading and what's sub-heading), mediocre layout, and poor writing. It *does* contain some interesting stills (some I've seen before) and some mildly amusing anecdotes, even if the book, which one would believe to be almost exclusively about Alyn's adventures playing the Man of Steel, devotes less than one-fourth of its pages to that topic, and totally ignores Columbia's sequel ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN.

Alyn devotes several minutes to a banal question-and-answer session, during which late-comers asked questions about things Alyn had already explained (the classic, "How did you fly?" among them) Alyn demonstrated the severe limits of his fuzzy recollections (he could not say, for example, what role ex-Superman editor Mort Weisinger played in the writing of the screenplay of ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN) beyond the quasi-humorous anecdotes he dutifully recited.

The audience held its collective breath, waiting expectantly for the moment when a small, childish voice would pipe up from the back of the auditorium, like a ghost from Alyn's personal appearance tours of the '40's, to ask the great flesh-and-blood Man of Steel to fly. *Oddly enough,* it never came.





GARDNER FOX

JIM STERANKO

AWARDS LUNCHEON

Report by BILL CANTEY Transcription by JEFF WASSERMAN & BOB ZIMMERMAN

The 1971 Comic Art Awards Luncheon was an orderly highlight of the New York Convention. The generation gap closed with a satisfying sigh as older fans in coats and ties sat down to break bread with their younger brethren who were attired in --ah-- more bizarre clothing. At numerous tables, some fans obligingly tied back their long hair, temporarily exchanging their "cave-man" look for a "frontiersman" appearance.

Food was promptly served, and just as promptly disposed of; all attending being anxious to attack the real meat of the meeting.

Seated at the high table, Kirk Alyn, the serial Superman from the forties began an impressive line-up. Although Mr. Alyn was noticeably silent during the gab sessions that followed the introductions, he would later address a large assembly, in a lengthy and highly entertaining talk on the, now happy, hazards of portraying the Man Of Steel, as well as a number of other equally difficult assignments. His book, A JOB FOR SUPERMAN, was on sale in the dealer's room, and an autographed copy made a super-fine souvenir of the convention.

Next, Gardner Fox, an award recipient, was seated to the immediate right of Convention Chairman, Phil Seuling. On Phil's left, Jim Steranko, who would receive the second award. John Benson held down the final position as interview-moderator.

Often, conventioneers are accused of presenting awards to anyone with a "name" who'll show up. Not true in this case, over four dozen professional writers and artists were in attendance at the 1971 Comic Art Convention, which completely squelched any such thought.

The selection of Fox and Steranko to receive special honors was a stroke of genius. First, Gardner Fox is the most prolific producer of stories, characters, and comic book ideas that the industry has ever seen. A thirty-odd year veteran of comic book writing, Fox has contributed something close to fifty million words to the worlds of popular fiction. Which is the equivalent of a thousand novels at a pace of over twenty novels a year. And he's still writing. Mr. Fox entered the comic book field in its golden age beginning, when the accent for creation and the responsibility for success was placed heavily on the writer, with the artists taking a back seat. The general contention being that one picture may be worth a thousand words; but it takes words to say that. Gardner Fox in the pursuit of his love affair with words has invented a multitude of worlds. Indeed, the DC empire was built upon a Fox Foundation.

Second, Jim Steranko, the personification of the immediate prescence in the comics world, both as fan and professional. His success as an artist, writer, editor, and publisher in such a relatively short period of time indicates a human dynamo of talent as well as a genuine love for the graphic story. And again in reference to the "one picture, thousand words" theory, Jim Steranko knows *which* thousand words can be replaced by a picture. His blendings of words and pictures emerge as music for the eyes; music, being another field wherein Steranko enjoys more than a fair degree of talent. His place in the final history of comics is already assured, and his prescence at the Awards-Luncheon lent a fine feeling of generation-balance to the occasion.

After Phil Seuling's introduction wherein Jim Steranko emerged as "one of the best artists in the field," Gardner Fox, "one of the best writers," and John Benson, "one of the best interviewers," the talk-feast began in earnest. I don't recall if Kirk Alyn was described as "one of the most exciting film actors," or not, but Phil Seuling is very much the diplomat; and held the four-day convention together almost single-handedly. In spite of blunders by hotel management (and mis-management) in their frequent attempts to sabotage the entire affair by re-renting convention space already consigned to scheduled activities. The Luncheon period was one of the few times that Phil wasn't racing around like a hairy Woozy Winks, recovering fumbles not of his making. An amazing man, and a super-fan, Phil Seul-

ing, one of the best convention chairmen --oh hell, the best!

John Benson took over with a fine, warming-up session of questions. Following, is a full transcription of the interviews with Guests Jim Steranko and Gardner Fox by John Benson and Phil Seuling respectively:

JOHN BENSON: There are a lot of fine professionals, but Jim is about the only one creating comics in a single, individual way today. I think I know how you got into comics because you went around the country and had and that's that. What did you do before you went into the comics field? I understand that you worked in magic and so forth. Was this a sideline or your main occupation at that time?

JIM STERANKO: Magic was more or less a hobby. I worked in bars, as a close-up magician behind the bar; I worked table to table. I wrote a number of books on magic, most of which will be republished by SUPERGRAPHICS in the next year perhaps. Since the time I was 17, I supplemented my income by playing in almost every band within 50 miles of my town, which is Reading, Pennsylvannia. I played every instrument, but primarily the guitar. As a livelihood, I've done nothing but artwork in one form or another. Finally, when I got into comics, I was an art director at a small advertising agency in Reading.

JOHN: There's one question that particularly interests me. I think that in the last several years, although you've done some comic work, you've done it because you like the field, other than your other outside sources of income. Do you think that there is any relationship between, that the fact comics are not your own field and that you've done many unusual things in comics that aren't otherwise being done today?

JIM: I think there is a corollation between those things, John. For example, when I worked as an art director in the ad agency, I was constantly viewing many different kinds of artwork. I myself was doing wash drawings, photo touchings of large machinery by air brush, doing compositions, typography and so forth. Really, I've said this many times, but I don't consider myself an artist. When I think about people in comics like Reed Crandall, Neal Adams, and a half dozen other people, who really draw amazingly well (there are many I'm leaving out, of course), I realize that these people are the real artists in the comics. If I would have to catagorize myself, I would probably say that I belong in the class of the storytellar. As a matter of fact, things like typography, design, photography gimmicks, op art and pop art in my comics, which came from films, from radio, from pulps, from the ad agency, from business, from everything that I could possibly aply from my entire background (including the magic I have done and the gigs I have played over a period of 13 years), go into every comic book story. Nick Fury became Steranko. I gave him my background and said, "Here, this is what you are." I wrote him into it. So perhaps every area that I'm interested in eventually will show up in most of my stories.

JOHN: And incidentally, someone told me that Mr. Miracle was based on one of your magic books.

JIM: Yes, as a matter of fact that is true. I remember that when I first met Jack Kirby, I gave him one of my books. It was called, STERANKO'S WORLD OF ESCAPES. There I had explained how to break out of jail cells, packing boxes dropped to the bottom of a river and etc. And soon afterward, he did a SHIELD story when it was in STRANGE TALES, about a jail break; of course, it was all Kirby, there was nothing of Steranko there, yet it inspired him to do that. But about a year and a half ago, I met Jack in New York; he had moved out to the coast and came back to New York City. Jack said this to me: "Kid, you don't know what you got." "What do you mean, Jack?" "No, no, I'll tell you later. You don't know what you got." "Okay." I didn't know what he was talking about. He elaborated on it a little bit, but what he was saying was that it was something I knew about, that I hadn't exploited, taken advantage of, or used to my best possible advantage. About a year later, MR. MIRACLE came out. And Mr. Miracle was based on that book, STERANKO'S WORLD OF ESCAPES. So, I suppose by rights, you could say I was Mr. Miracle, which completes a very strange cycle. A cycle of a boy growing up, being influenced by comic books, getting into the business as an artist and writer, and suddenly finding a book on the newsstands that's roughly based on some of his exploits.

JOHN: In your HISTORY OF COMICS [Volume I], the long early piece on the pulps is certain evidence that you had conversations personally with some of the big pulp writers. I wonder if you knew any anecdotes that would make that history interesting.

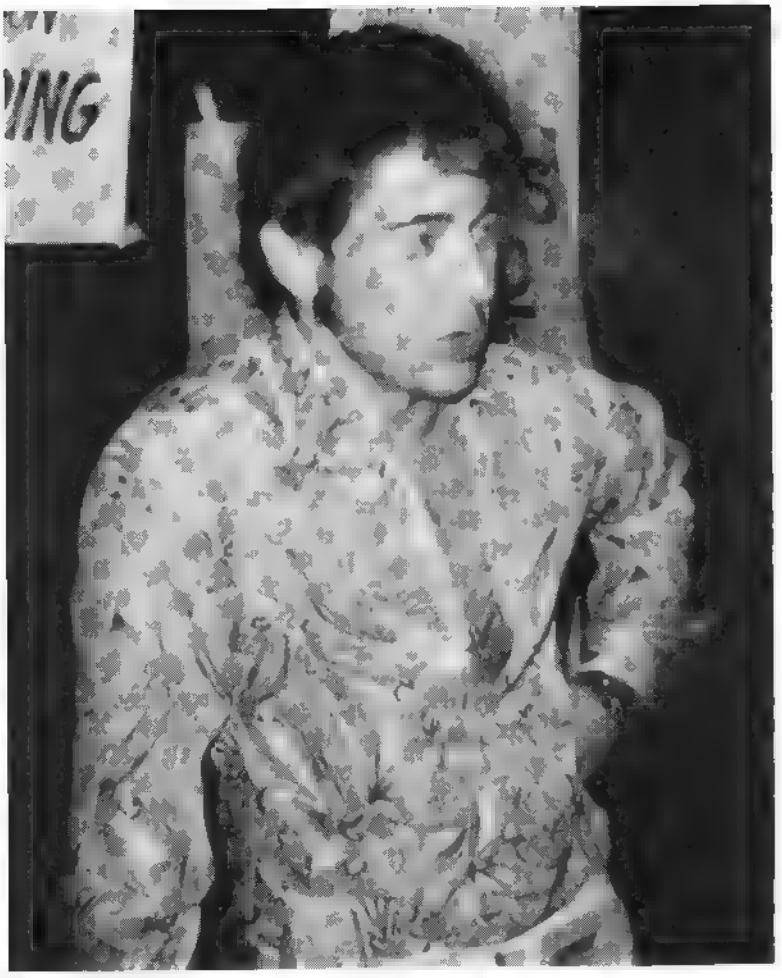
JIM: Of course I have many anecdotes, but I don't think that any could be told in public. There is a man that I referred to in that book who has written THE SHADOW, who has written many books on magic and has been an idol of mine for years and years. He was the editor of GENT MAGAZINE when they were competing heavily with PLAYBOY. He's the editor of ROAD MAGAZINE now. His name is Bruce Elliot. Bruce Elliot was like my father here in New York City. He's always there to give advice, to turn me on to the right people and so forth. Now Bruce wrote for comics, he wrote for pulps, he wrote things like RED DRAGON COMICS, he wrote NICK CARTER and others. He wrote many, many pulp stories and a number of SHADOW stories in the late forties when THE SHADOW became a detective. Now, through Bruce I met Walter Gibson. Walter Gibson, as most of you know, is really the author of THE SHADOW. He wrote THE SHADOW under the pen name of Maxwell Grant. Now the last time I saw Walter was about five months ago. He's in his seventies, he's an amazing man, he's very prolific. He was writing as much as twenty thousand words a day, which is incredible. He wrote a novel every other week. They were good novels; they were creative. All pulp work was rather formularized as Gardner Fox will probably tell you later. He was amazingly inventive, and besides THE SHADOW, he wrote THE SHADOW COMICS and worked for Charles Biro writing crime stories; Crime Reporter-type of things. Walter Gibson is sort of Bruce Elliot's father and sort of took care of him. And so if you really want to put this puzzle together, you might call me the son of the son of The Shadow. Who knows? [Laughter]

JOHN: In preparing THE HISTORY OF COMICS, it would interest me to know what was your starting point, the structure of the book. Did you try to write an outline for it; in other words, an extensive written outline, or did you go through the research first to find out how the structure fit?

JIM: Well, the story of THE HISTORY OF COMICS is rather complex. [Addressing audience:] If you would like to hear it, I'll tell you, but it would take a few minutes. [Applause]

I'd ride from Pennsylvannia to New York and after you've made the trip about three hundred times, it gets tiring. It takes about two or three hours depending on the traffic, the weather and so forth. So in order to amuse myself and not fall asleep as I'm always prone to do, I play games. Little mind games. Right around the time the idea for THE HISTORY OF COMICS STARTED, I thought that perhaps it would be a good idea if I spent the two hours on the trip to New York thinking of an idea that would earn me 100 or 500 dollars. If I could think of one idea in those two hours, it would be worth the trip. And I conceived the idea of doing a book about the history of comics as a Marvel summer one-shot. Marvel always has been hung up in the summer as to what to put out. Wouldn't it be great to do twenty pages of comic book history in one of those books? I began elaborating on that idea and by the time I got to New York, it was going to be a MAGAZINE MANAGEMENT 75¢ slick book like TRUE ROMANCES, if you can call that a slick book. I presented the idea to Stan Lee, and he was kind of cool about it. Of course I had nothing to show him, I had no presentation. One interesting sidelight, was that about a year earlier, maybe in 1968, I had taken a presentation called something like, HOW TO WRITE AND DRAW FOR THE COMICS, to my agent, Henry Morrison. The presentation was with illustrations and a typed-up outline of the book. I was going to tell how to write and draw for comics, and include a gallery of comic art. Another section to that was going to reprint some comics.

Anyway, I presented the idea to Stan, then went home, worked on the idea and presented it to him again in this fashion. I said, 'It will write a book and we'll call it STAN LEE'S HISTORY OF COMICS.' I knew I wasn't getting through to him earlier, so I changed my approach. 'This book will be so good, you can't afford not to be able to put your name on it.' And so he consented to it. [Laughter] This is taking nothing away from Stan. I told him, 'I will give you x percentage to put your name on this book, because the name Stan Lee is magic; it sells.' So whatever you put his name on will sell well. Anyway, I collected many fanzines and I browsed through my comic collection. Originally I intended to have 16 chapters in the book. The book was to be 64 pages, 8 1/2 x 11. That's about one fourth the size of the book now. I talked to a friend of mine and I gave him the complete format of the book on little playing card reproductions which broke it down into what I told him. I gave him all the fanzines and he wrote me an outline based on those fanzine articles. Full of misinformation. I took that outline and talked to the people connected to the industry; people I worked with, people that I didn't work with, but knew; people that I had to call up on the phone; people that I didn't know, but admired. The manuscript was originally 300 pages long. If you go up to the Sky Top Room, you'll see a display of THE HISTORY OF COMICS material. It contains some handwritten



pages by me. The entire book was written in long hand. If you go, you'll see some of those pages, if you can read them. Putting together the book, collecting the facts and verifying it, was quite a task. The second volume that will be coming out in August was even tougher because I was dealing, not only with just two top companies, National and Marvel, where many of the people remain, but with companies that were defunct for twenty-five years; Fiction House, Saint John, Quality and so forth. Volume II was really very tough to put together. It will be much bigger than Volume I, with 400 illustrations in it. It's going to be quite a book. I think I mentioned most of it John. Maybe I touched upon something you would like to ask me about.

JOHN: I think that that does cover what I was interested in finding out. The book was published by SUPERGRAPHICS. This is your publishing house and I would like to know what houses you used before.

JIM: Well, working as I have in many areas of, not only comics, I thought it would be wise to stop working for other people and maybe do a little for myself. I think I made a lot of money for a lot of people over the years, and really have almost nothing to show for it. So I decided to take a publishing venture myself, and came up with SUPERGRAPHICS PUBLISHING COMPANY. What we will publish is all comics-related material. I have a man working right now who will be doing a series of film books. The first one may be out in September or October. I guarentee you that they'll be the most exciting film books that you've seen in a long time. I bought the copyright back on all of my magic books. I will be republishing them, which are completely devoid of comic material, but I think comic book fans and myself included, will enjoy the magic books and doing the tricks. I think many of the people here have probably seen me do a card or coin trick. I have several other projects in the works, that I can't tell you about right now, because they're rather far away. I don't want to give away the impact that they will have when I announce them. There are other things coming up. Of course I'm working on THE MAGAZINE OF COMIC ART, which will be in full color with comic material; TALON, (of course many people have asked me about this), the S&S character that will be out in LIFE MAGAZINE size with a full color, wrap-around cover; a book called HOW TO WRITE AND DRAW FOR THE COMICS; and one HISTORY OF COMICS each year. There will be about six HISTORY's altogether. This year, Volume II will be out. That's THE RETURN OF THE HISTORY OF COMICS. Next year, THE SON OF THE HISTORY OF COMICS. The following year THE REVENGE OF THE HISTORY OF COMICS. [Laughter, applause]

PHIL SEULING: I'm waiting for THE HISTORY OF COMICS MEETS ABBOT AND COSTELLO. [Laughter] I listen to baseball a lot. That's one of my hang-ups. And every sports writer that hits Chicago comes away with stories of one man: Ernie Banks. He's 40 years old now and he has played baseball for a good long time now, maybe 20 years, and he has hit 500 home runs. Every day he gets out there, he looks around. It could be raining, there could be snow on the ground, but yet he says, "Isn't it a beautiful day for baseball?" He gets out there and he's glad to be alive, to do what he's doing. He has this whole attitude of, "Holy Smokes, I get paid for this?" And I'm talking, of course, about the Ernie Banks of comic books: Gardner Fox, who said just those words: "I get paid for this?" Is that figure of five million words kind of accurate? Fifty million would be close. Isn't that incredible? Fifty million words and still enjoying it. I think that's fantastic. I'm going to ask you a nice, easy question in the beginning. What are your sources? I mean besides everything in the Encyclopedia Britannica. Where do you find the thoughts that lead you on.

GARDNER FOX: The first thought obviously comes from inside my head, but actually, I maintain two file cabinets chock-full of stuff. As my wife can tell you, the attic is crammed with books and magazines -- all the LIFE Science Nature books and all that kind of thing. Actually, what I don't have at my fingertips at home are travel books. Anything that I need about unusual facts of science or nature, I can find in my files or somewhere among the, at least 3000 books that I have. One rule we do have in the house is that nobody touches my books, not even my grandchildren, because I know just about where everything is; if it's downstairs, or up in the attic, or in a corner somewhere, that's where it is.

PHIL: I guess that's a fairly accurate description of your mind. Do you love to store away little known facts? Do you have the kind of mind that can answer the $64,000 question?

GARDNER: I go in for trivia because you never know when some little fact, some little legend can be put to some good use in a story, whether it's a comic book or a novel that you're writing. Sometimes some fact or legend will lend a little extra flavor and improve the atmosphere of the story.

PHIL: I really didn't mean that your mind was a storehouse for useless information, [laughter] -- which I realized after I had asked you. What I wanted to ask you was, "What are your pet subjects?" I feel that I am drawn into some things that I have no business being drawn into, like vertebrate anatomy. What are your favorite fields?

GARDNER: I am a lawyer, but I haven't practiced law in 33 years. I was a lawyer before I became a comic book writer. I'm always interested in knowledge, if only for the sake of knowledge. My only problem is that when I'm looking up things, I get so involved in reading and researching, I have to say, "Let's get back to work. We're not making any money this way." I remember that when I once wrote THE SWORDSMAN, I had to get a map of the city of Cairo in the year 1350. Well, you'd figure that this is a little difficult to get, but I managed to track one down in a Mount Vernon library. The librarians just hated to see me come in, [laughter] -- because if I couldn't find something in their library, and I knew it pretty well, they didn't have much chance of finding it either. I remember that I once went through two books for the word, 'versitrix.' I know now that it's a medieval term for the member of the household who carries around the spending money in a purse. I searched thru Anglo-Saxon dictionaries, all kinds of dictionaries, but I couldn't find it. So finally, I went to a reference library and said "Can you tell me what the word 'versitrix'

means? I think I know what it means, but before I use it in a book, I want to be sure." Well, they spent about three weeks looking up that word and they couldn't find it either. [Laughter] So everytime I came near that reference desk, they began to groan. I'm interested in knowledge, just for the sake of learning. It's kind of a hobby with me. I like sports; I follow the Mets, the Jets, and all that stuff. I have season tickets at the Saint John Basketball games and I drag my wife to them occasionally. I get a lot of fun out of life. I'm not rich, but I get a lot of fun out of life.

PHIL: I think that what you've just described is your sense of wonder, which is operating all the time. It makes me marvel that there are times when I turn off and that after fifty million words in comic books, I don't think you'll ever turn off. What do you read for your own amusement? Do you do any pastime reading?

GARDNER: I read the works of two writers. I reread them and reread them. One, I'm sure no one has ever heard of, Jeffrey Farnell, and the other is a mystery writer, John Dixon Carter, whose style I admire tremendously. He also writes as "Carter Dixon." I think he's absolutely fantastic. I can still remember the time I read my first Edgar Rice Burroughs' on a brownstone stoop in Brooklyn. I think I was eleven years old when I got THE GODS OF MARS and THE WARLORDS OF MARS. This opened up a complete new world for me. When I was eleven years old, there were no comics. I read all the Burroughs', Harold Lamb's, Albert Mundy's, and most of those I have home in my library. Once in a while, I'll pick one up and reread it and enjoy it.

PHIL: You've been in the business a long time and I think that it tells a lot about you since we on the fringe of the field can see the great hollowness, emptiness, stubborness and minds that won't move, in and of the industry. Now that you have some perspective in the field, have you ever regretted any directions the field has not taken? Are there any things that you think could have been done more fully?

GARDNER: That's a very tough question. First of all, as a creative person, I never set any business standards for any of the outfits I worked with. Where creativity comes into conflict with the sales department, creativity will always take a backseat to sales. I don't care what it is. I know that at some of the paperback outfits I write for, their every move is dictated by the sales department. If such and such is selling, write that. Don't write what isn't selling. The comic book publishers are guided on that same principle. Now for something out of my own personal experience... I still love a character called ADAM STRANGE. [Applause] I enjoyed writing Adam Strange tremendously, but as they say, "the Almighty Dollar rears its head." It wasn't selling as well as other things and at that time, National made a change-over and gave Julie Schwartz and me BATMAN to write. That's when the New Look came in. Creativity must necessarily take a back seat so any new direction in artwork or writing must keep the sales in mind. This is an unfortunate part of our world but it happens to be true. A lot of times, what writers would like to write, or the way they would like to handle a story cannot be done because of certain -- let's call them -- editorial policies.

I feel that if the publishers change their viewpoints on a lot of things, there would be millions of new directions. Offhand, I wouldn't want to say what they would be without actually sitting down and giving that question a good couple of hours to think about. The commercial end of it, however, always has to be considered in anything like that.

PHIL: If you were to meet that mythical angel that everybody reads about and he came down with millions of dollars in his pockets and said, "Gardner, I like you. I'll give you any price to write anything you want," what would you be doing?

GARDNER: I enjoy writing fantasy. I enjoy writing sword and sorcery. I enjoy any kind of story that is entertaining. If I had a million dollars, I don't think my life would change one iota. All it would mean to me would be security, so that if somebody didn't like that story or didn't like that novel, I could still eat. And I enjoy eating. [Laughter]

PHIL: Gardner, you've stirred the imagination, the hearts and the minds of many. What have been the rewards for you?

GARDNER: Well, of course, this Luncheon is reward enough. I think, though, that there are two rewards. One is the self-satisfaction of turning out a story that you really think is good. Now by that, I'm not on an ego trip. What I mean is that you do the best you can. I will say that with nine out of ten stories that I write, there is always this nagging doubt; "Could this have been better? How could I have made it better?" But, of course, when you're confronted with deadlines, you don't have too much time to put it away for a month; there's an artist waiting. He has to eat too, you know. So you bring the script in and that's it. But there's always that little aching feeling that it could have been better. The other reward is the fact that the fans say that they enjoy this, that they remember that. It's always a lot of fun to be able to bring pleasure to people. I'm sure that writers, while they write for money (no question about that), will attest that there is a certain amount of good feeling that's involved in this kind of work.

PHIL: Gardner, my appreciation of your last fifty million words is second only to my anticipation to your next fifty million. [Applause]

GARDNER: I'm not through, Phil. I want to tell you that sometimes I feel like 175 years old. Other times I feel like 20; and I still have a lot of my best writing ahead of me. Maybe I'll try to get some of those fifty million words out.

After the two interviews, there followed a short question and answer period.

Steranko and Fox disagreed mildly on the possibilities of breaking into the comic book business as a new, creative writer. Fox advised hopeful, young writers to consider television, or anything but comics. Still, if you're determined to write for comics, the best bet is to tailor your stories to suit the comic format before approaching the comic book editor. Break it down into pages and panels, prove its adaptability. It's up to you to sell your story by bending your efforts in the comic medium's direction. No easy task for a newcomer.

Jim Steranko is of the opinion that new talent, real talent, will always find room in comics. He passed on the advice given him when he first entered the art field via an advertising agency. The secret of success? Be good at your craft; so good that when you approach a company with a sample of your work, they'll hire you to keep you from going to the competition. Determination and practice, it's that simple. Now you know.

Actual presentation of the Award Plaques concluded the luncheon. The first, inscribed, "To Gardner Fox for the worlds he has created and the marvels he has wrought through his storytelling in the field of comic art." The second, "To Jim Steranko for the agility of mind and pen he has used to bring excitement to the field of comic art."

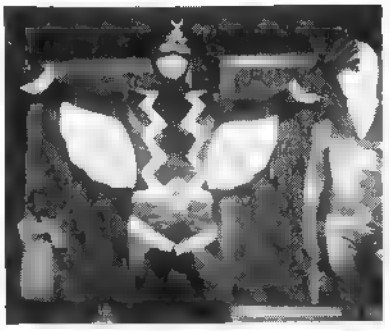
Heavy stuff, it seems now. But a sincere and deeply appreciated event. Gardner Fox beamed with pleasure by an overwhelming display of fan gratitude. Jim Steranko accepted his award as a vote of confidence, modestly reminding the assembly that he'd written less than thirty comic stories; seemingly a small contribution to Gardner Fox's mind-stunning record.

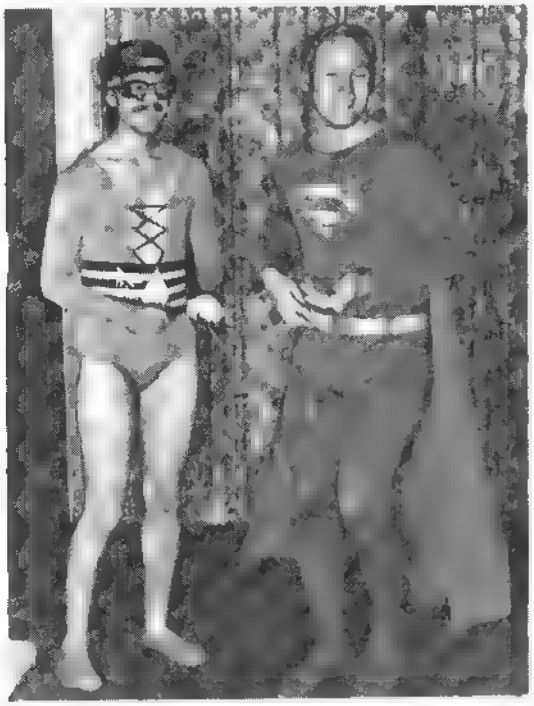
But, the combination of "old-timer" and "new-comer" guests of honor increased the quality of the luncheon (as planned), and gave the gathering of fans a valued, "cross-section" view of living, comic history.

L to R: Kirk Alyn, Mrs. Fox, Gardner Fox

THE PARADE OF...

SUPER-STARS





THE LINE-UP:

BLACK BOLT [with black box on head].. . Ethan Roberts
CAPTAIN AMERICA [with a trashcan shield].. Bob Miller
THE GHOST RIDER..... Jerry Sinkovich
COUSIN EERIE..... Neal Pozner
COLONEL SANDERS THE JUNKIE..... John Suzac
MR. SPOCK... .... Bill Garnett
SUPER STERANKO..... .... Gerard Geary
BLACK BOLT [in blue and black]..... Mike Zeck
DEADMAN..... Kurt Golzonk
THOR [with white helmet]..... Al Bradford
FRANKLIN RICHARDS..... ... . Natasha Hyman
WILMA DEERING... ..... Heida Saha
BOY, SON OF TARZAN ... . Matthew Saha
THE SHADOW..... ..... . Allan Emanuel
DARKSEID..... ... . Martin Pasko
CAPTAIN AMERICA [with red shield]..... Jim Glenn
PLASTIC MAN..... .... Bob Weckesser
GREEN LANTERN..... .... Mike Gilbert
THOR..... ..... Jeff Strell
THE VISION..... David V...
GREEN ARROW... .. .. Harry Sobel
SUPERMAN [in the television threads].. ... Mike Nolan

PRIZE WINNERS:

MIKE ZECK..... Black Bolt
KURT GOLZONK. ..... Deadman
HEIDI SAHA.... ..... Wilma Deering

THE JUDGES:

*Gardner Fox * Jim Steranko * Kirk Alyn*

After the costume parade, those who were slated to appear on the EC Panel made anything but a prompt appearance. Seeing as to how he only wanted a few minutes for his own question and answer period with the fans, and being the true showman he is, Steranko decided that he should fill the gap in the con schedule with his own event.

THE RHYTHM OF STERANKO

Report by JEFFREY H. WASSERMAN

Instead of talking about his HISTORY OF COMICS, Steranko immediately asked for questions from the assembly. The crowd was rather small. The EC Panel was what was scheduled and none expected Steranko to be holding his discussion at that time. The small audience, limited to questions *outside of* THE HISTORY OF COMICS by Steranko's request (he had just talked about it for a half hour at the Luncheon that same day), managed to come up with quite a few interesting ones.

The first of which was about Jim's future jobs for Marvel and DC. Jim said that none existed at the moment. He echoed a remark that Stan Lee made on one of Alex Bennett's radio shows last year; that Jim can have an assignment just as soon as they can come up with one that doesn't have a definite deadline. "I don't work on comic book deadlines again, *ever*." Jim would work on SUPERGRAPHICS matters first before those of comic books.

The next question was a result of the first. Asked why he doesn't do any comic book work now, Jim replied that he was never making so little money during his life as he was during his comic book days. He explained that he had been six feet tall before he took on the jobs of being a comic book artist, a member of a band and an art director at an advertising agency at the same time.

Addressing *the son of the son of the Shadow*, a fan asked if Bantam Paperbacks were planning to reprint anymore SHADOW novels. The grandson of Lamont Cranston said that Bantam was searching around for the best format to present it. Jim went on to say that Sandy Kassim, who did the first few Shadow covers, drew the caped nemesis of crime as a lunatic, a grinning madman, and that the readers didn't like this image. "I for one would love to do those covers. Hint, hint, in case anybody from Bantam is out there. *[Applause]*

Asked if he knew if further Spider novels would be reprinted, Jim admitted that he doesn't know *everything* about the pulps. "You're getting humble," called a fan. On that line, Jim went on to say that while he was painting the G-8 covers for Berkley Medallion, they were issuing the SPIDER, and that he was to do the covers of the second five SPIDER books. A fan asked why he was taken off the G-8 cover assignments. The SPIDER bombed, he said, but people bought the G-8's and as an experiment, Berkley Medallion decided to use the old pulp covers for the paperbacks. "This experiment bombed, right into the ground."

'Do I have any intention of wrapping up the loose ends of the SHIELD epic?" Jim repeated the question addressed to him. He replied, saying that he didn't want to tell the ending of "Who Is Scorpio?" and "Whatever Became of Scorpio?"; that he would like to finish the Scorpio stories in his MAGAZINE OF COMIC ART, perhaps in text form. If Marvel denies him the permission to end it in his own magazine, Jim said that he would produce the story without having anything to do with SHIELD; but starring in it would be a secret agent with an *eye patch*.

Jim announced that a Hollywood studio was producing a screenplay of his and that he was very interested in the film industry. The name of it was still tentative and that was all he could say about it.

"As a matter of fact, I probably learned to read by reading comic books," answered Steranko. He was always interested in comics, but never got a chance to get into them until he joined Harvey, created a lot of characters for them and didn't like the way they were drawn. He then showed samples to other companies and was taken in. That was how Steranko got started in comics.

"Whatever happened to Secret Agent X?" was the question. Being that it was a Paramount property, slated for TV, when the Paramount Cartoon Studios closed, the entire project was stopped. Someday, Jim hoped, he could print the 20 pages of

pencils from the project in the MAGAZINE OF COMIC ART. The first issue of this publication should be out in early '72, announced Jim.

"Why would you ask me that question?" Jim went on to explain that it was *Dan Adkins* who drew the Starhawk strip, *not he*. The Guardians of the Galaxy bombed so badly that the Goodmans decided to have no more science fiction, so they shelved Starhawk.

Jim then fielded the question of who he prefers to ink his work, himself or Joe Sinnott. "Well, actually, I don't like inking my own work, because it's so tough, there's so much detail." He explained that after writing, pencilling and planning the layouts of a strip, he didn't like to have to go over it again in ink; that he'd rather have someone else do it. Sinnott, whose style is as tight as his own, made the strip look much better than it really was, explained Steranko. Frank Giacoia's loose and bold style helped to loosen the strip and added a lot of his own style to what he inked.

Jim would like to do comics in a different format; that one was expected after thirty years of the same thing. It would be done SUPERGRAPHICS-wise, he added.

Talon, he answered, will cost around five dollars and be the size of LIFE MAGAZINE with black and white insides. It will have a full color cover, wrap-around. Marvel was never intended to have Talon, he explained. He went on to say that most sword and sorcery stories now in the comics fall short of Robert E. Howard's intentions. Jim said that he believed that *he* could do it, but *not* in the style that he did SHIELD, with all its psychodelic and pop art effects.

Jim started to list who influenced his art: Chester Ghould, Joe Maneely, Wallace Wood, Jack Kirby, Hogarth, Foster and in some way, almost all the art he had ever seen.

Steranko intends to assemble the very best of *fan writers* for SUPERGRAPHICS, and do whatever artwork that is needed for the magazine. Jim doesn't want to write as he has plenty of his own to write besides THE MAGAZINE OF COMIC ART.

Westerns are a favorite of Jim's, as he pointed out. The art exhibition held a few western paintings of Jim's. He doesn't like doing S&S, or science fiction as much as he likes to do western illustrations.

Jim then explained about his book about drugs. He said that THE BLOCK, whose originals were on display at the con, was published by SUPERGRAPHICS and copies are available to any organization who requests them.

"I believe that comics can be used to *instruct*, to *inform* and *educate* people. I think that comics have an incredible power. *[Applause]* They do. Just judging by myself, comics have influenced me greatly, and I think that they have influenced minds. It's the *literature of the young*. I think I said it in THE HISTORY OF COMICS that the comic book, not the comic *strip*, but the comic *book*, is the sole turf of the pre-adolescent people. I think that they believe in it, they take it seriously and it can be used to help. We have yet to prove it, I suppose, but whatever I can do in that direction or in the anti-drug direction, *I will do*. If I have to do 20 of them I'll do them. If *they* keep using them, *I'll* keep doing them. *[Applause]*

Approached about DC's Edugraphics Program, Jim replied, "What Edugraphics Program? There isn't any."

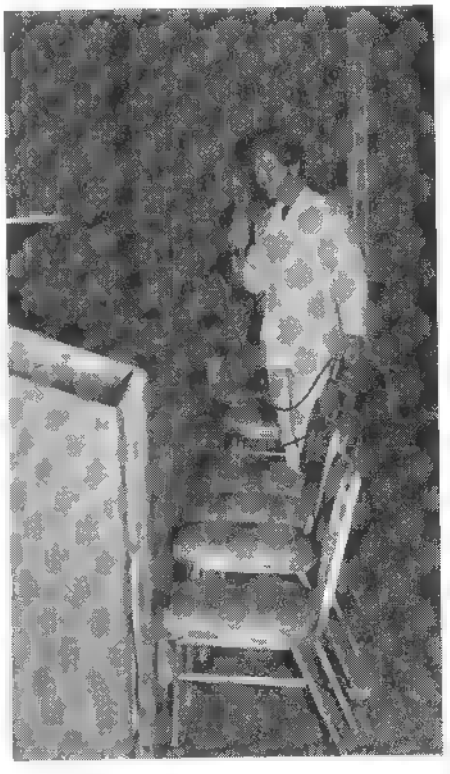
Another question on sword and sorcery followed the query asked for Jim's thoughts on Marvel's Conan. "I think that they ought to get rid of the people on it and start from scratch."

Jim explained that everything that was himself was put into Nick Fury. He went on to say that the ending of the Scorpio plot as portrayed in the AVENGERS was *not* the way he had intended it to end. *"They lied."*

"The question and answer period over, Jim Steranko started to drum up some business for his posters on sale in the dealers room and for the $25 a night seminar he was holding on how to write and draw for the comics. Amidst the applause, Jim welcomed the crew from EC and started the introductions of the panel.

PHOTO ON PRECEEDING PAGE: Jim Steranko at question and answer session, taken from front of stage. BOTTOM: Steranko, taken from side of dias.

Illustration of Val on preceeding page by Jay Mike; Nick Fury illustration by Dave Cockrum.



THE LIVING SPIRIT OF E.C.

Report by BILL CANTEY

Illustration by BERNI WRIGHTSON

There are worlds within worlds, and comic fandom must be the most "inside" world of all. For even inside that inside world exist a myriad of worlds, ranging from cherished collections of yellowed newspaper strips to a just recovered, favorite fanzine. Standing tall and secure in its position, the world of EC Comics is enthralling three times over. First, by virtue of its superior writing and artwork. Next, because of the fact that it "holds still;" a comparatively small line of titles were published, beginning in the very late forties and ending abruptly in the mid fifties. Their crushing overkill being affected by zealous do-gooders, envious competitors in the publishing world, and masterstrokes of stupidity on the part of distributors and wholesalers. But the third, and most enduring factor, was EC's enthusiasm, starting with the actual, creating era and continuing down to this present time of still struggling collectors, recollecting fanzines, and EC reprints, both amatuer and professional. The overwhelming feeling of kinship that exists between the politicly attacked professionals, who brought the comic book to its finest hour, and the often harassed comic fans, who continue to applaud them, was reflected in the EC Panel, a highlight of the 1971 Comic Art Convention.

The Panel, from a fan's eye view of left to right, included Al Williamson, a former EC artist, and, of course, a present day artist of exceptional talent. Bill Gaines, the mastermind and first writer of EC comics. The man whose imagination attracted and inspired the best artists and illustrators in the field. And the man who bore the brunt of the absurd political and press attack directed toward comics (and especially EC comics) in the mid fifties. (It is interesting to note that EC's second writer, Al Feldstein is still employed by EC's MAD MAGAZINE as editor. EC lives in actuality, as well, as in spirit). Joe Orlando, EC artist, and presently very active at National Periodicals as a writer and editor as well as an artist. Working with Wallace Wood, Joe developed an eye-pleasing style which enhanced many an EC classic. E. Nelson Bridwell, a National executive and expert on the legal aspects of publishing. Russ Cochran, EC fan exceptional. Whenever Bill Gaines' memory failed him during the panel discussion, Russ supplied additional information. Fantastic recall. Roger Hill, dedicated EC fan. Writer and artist for Squa Tront, a superlative EC fanzine. A quick conference between Russ and Roger could answer *any* question on EC's history; they're more than fans; they're desciples.

The panel began with introductions and general information to ascertain all assembled were aware of the subject to be discussed. A great "warming-up" story was told by Bill Gaines, referring to a fan letter written by a former EC reader who was a comics buying youngster when EC was an active publisher. Currently, as president of EC Fan Addict Club # 3, he wrote to Mr. Gaines to let him know how their five member group finally turned out. He, their president was a Ph.D. and head of the physics department of Drake University. Another was a doctor, the third a lawyer, the fourth a successful businessman, and the fifth — was in jail. Which proves that comics not only causes delinquency, but doctors, lawyers, professors, and managers as well.

Opening the panel to questions not only gave the encounter a communicative flavor but provided a series of "springboards" for the panel members to expound upon. The first query gained us the information that the average print run of an EC issue was between 350,000 and 400,000, with about 75% sales. Some of the more popular horror books went to 450,000 with even higher sales. Which would be a terrific percentage by today's standards. But, comics sales were much better twenty years ago, and EC was always a relatively small publisher, so no one made a fortune. Then, if EC was so popular, why did it fall? A one-two-three punch. One, bad publicity resulting from a congressional investigation of comics, condemnation of comics by P.T.A. committees and similar organizations, and the general feeling that since comics weren't really necessary and they *might* be harmful; why not stamp them out, and see if the crime rate would go down? (Almost no one over thirty held comic books as a fond memory from their childhood, so comics had no strong defenders). Two, the Comics Code Authority was formed, and — well — kicked the guts out of the comic story. (EC's main story-strength was in its love for the hard hitting climax). Three, while EC had the courage to publish uncoded comics, distributors and wholesalers wouldn't touch them. EC finally tried a series of coded comics, but their "bad" reputation had already ruined them. They just couldn't move their product.

The EC hard-cover book of horror stories was discussed next. Christmas of '71 was the hoped for publishing date.

A brief discussion of science fiction in the Gaines style focused attention on the EC classic, "Judgement Day." A hard-hitting story then, it holds up well now. Briefly, a colony of blue robots and orange robots, left to fend for themselves on an undeveloped planet are visi-

TOP PHOTO: Left to right: Al Williamson, Bill Gaines, Joe Orlando, E. Nelson Bridwell, Russ Cochran, Roger Hill. BOTTOM PHOTO: Left to right: Al Williamson, Bill Gaines, Joe Orlando, E. Nelson Bridwell.

WRIGHTSON
'71

ted by an ambassador from Earth to see if they're ready to join "The Great Galactic Republic." But, the orange-colored robots had gained and maintained an unfair advantage over the blue. "Not ready!", judges the ambassador, and re-enters his spaceship. After blast-off, the Earthman removes his space helmet. He is a negro. Beautiful! Published a second time as EC was in its death throes, the Comics Code Authority objected to the line, "---the beads of perspiration on his dark skin---." Incredible! But, Gaines stuck to his guns, and the story survived, beads of sweat and all, to become the most remembered EC science fiction tale. Bill Gaines is rightly proud of his science fiction magazines, and praised the work of Orlando, Wood, Williamson, and all the other super-talented artists who contributed to their high quality.

A question on the mechanics of lay-outs and artwork was referred to the artists, Al Williamson and Joe Orlando. EC placed its accent heavily on writing. Artists were restricted, but the writers had a clear understanding of the problems of developing stories artwise. Pre-lettered panel-pages were supplied by Al Feldstein leaving space for the drawings. A fast method of creating graphic stories for experts only. Al Williamson enjoyed doing his own layouts when possible. Joe Orlando preferred the pre-lettered pages to facilitate a creative mood; less tedious. Bill Gaines recalled some instances where the special talents of an artist should have been turned loose on certain jobs, allowing them to add more to the development of the story. But, time was a factor to be considered. Gaines wrote a story a day; Feldstein "broke it down" on the board, lettering was added, and the artist contributed his work last. Harvey Kurtzman, an artist, writer, *and* editor for EC, sketched in abbreviated figures and backgrounds, as he wrote, leaving no doubt what and where the artist assigned was to draw the finished product. Wow!

A hope for EC color reprints of high quality was stifled by Gaines. The hundreds of assembled fans were not - ah - typical people. The market for such a product just doesn't exist. We'll have to content ourselves with bits and pieces from Ballantine Paperbacks, Russ Cochran's fine EC PORTFOLIO, Alan Light's FLASHBACK's, and Nostalgia Press's hardback of horror. SQUA TRONT was a genuine labor of love; Jerry sold some of his treasured EC collection to finance his 'zine. Greater love has no fan, than that.

Someone made the observation that the popularity of Frank Frazetta's work relied on something more than the fact that it's superbly rendered. And could that undefinable quality be described? A good subject for artists on the panel. Joe Orlando's comment was pure praise for Frazetta's work. A Frank Frazetta exhibit was on display in the hotel; one look and the significance was obvious, if undefinable. The EC story, "Squeeze Play" was suggested as an example of Frazetta's comic art. Russ Cochran expounded on certain artists' styles being suited to certain stories. Frazetta being especially suited to action stories involving muscular men and beautiful women. Well put. Al Williamson, youngest of the EC artists, tried to explain his working conditions and arrangements with his fellow artists. It was a highly social atmosphere with mild confusion resulting to this day when EC addicts try to decide who did what. But, although a Frazetta or Torres panel may occasionally pop out of a Williamson story, the job was always better than 95%

Jim Steranko welcomes the EC Gang on stage; shown are [from L to R]: Bill Gaines [sitting], Jim Steranko, Al Williamson.

Williamson when signed by Al. Gaines insisted on an artist signing an assigned job, to build what he called EC's "star system." EC had no continuing characters (until their "new direction" mags attempted to adhere to Code Authority), and depended strictly on the quality of its writing and artwork to survive. An interesting (and humorous) sidelight was that Al Williamson assisted Frank Frazetta on the story, "Squeeze Play," after passing up the assignment because it looked too complicated. Russ Cochran and Roger Hill revealed that their research indicated that EC's artists often exchanged ideas, to the credit and enhancement of the finished product. EC had *life;* and it had it more abundantly.

E. Nelson Bridwell made an effort to explain the working of the Comics Code Authority; comparing the power of today's Code to the more "touchy" Code of the late fifties. A lot depends on which member of the Code checks the comic story. Basically, the Code "soft-peddles" everything. And EC couldn't survive *that*.

With refreshing candor, Bill Gaines rephrased and sharpened a fan's question, asking himself, "Did you plagiarize Ray Bradbury?" The answer was a resounding, "Yes!" But, Bradbury was not offended. Correspondence between the two resulted in EC's adaptation of more Bradbury stories, with only token payments given for comic publishing rights. (This story was confirmed by Ray Bradbury in his interview in CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN # 13).

Marie Severin was EC's coloring artist, according to a questioning fan. Didn't EC's artists want to color their own work? Joe Orlando and Al Williamson were quite content with her work. Bill Gaines recalls it as a highly workable arrangement. Good story, good artwork, good coloring. "A one-two-three punch that could only be ruined by the printer."

A quick question revealed that most of the one-page text stories of EC were written by Jerry DeFuccio.

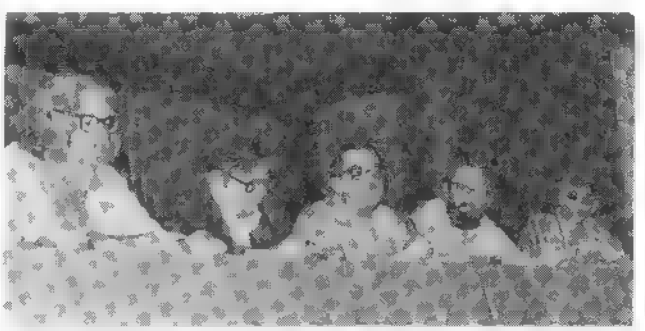
MAD MAGAZINE to be a National Publication? Bill Gaines reveals that it already is. Having sold MAD to the Premier Corporation of America (a holding company) in 1960. They sold MAD to National in 1964. Kinney Enterprises owns National along with Warner Brothers, several other magazines, record companies, funeral parlors, and a multitude of other businesses in and outside of the country. "All part of the MAD empire!" quipped Gaines.

Is MAD worried about the competition of the NATIONAL LAMPOON? Mad is a very strong magazine with a very broad appeal. the LAMPOON is for the over eighteen, under thirty group; sexier and more sophisticated. No threat to MAD.

Which was better, the old MAD comic book or the new MAD MAGAZINE. Harvey Kurtzman was the editor of the original MAD comic with its outrageous lampoons of, then present and recently remembered, movie and comics characters. The current MAD is the more popular product. MAD MAGAZINE had an initial circulation of over two million, and is the fifth largest selling magazine in the country. Outselling, over the years, popular magazines like LIFE, LOOK, SATURDAY EVENING POST, COLLIER'S, LIBERTY, FAMILY CIRCLE, WOMAN'S DAY, T.V. GUIDE, and PLAYBOY! A fantastic achievement for a humor magazine, and a proud, happy note to end the EC Panel discussion.

Considering the hard work that Bill Gaines, Al Williamson, Joe Orlando, and the rest of the EC Gang put into their early magazines, and the terrific beating they took toward the end, it's a wonder they're willing to talk about them at all. But, it's a favorite topic; they're not embittered. Bill Gaines' final decision to go all out with MAD MAGAZINE was a winner; publishing one magazine a month instead of over a dozen was a lot less work for a lot more money. Still, he recalls the chaotic phrase of the EC saga, not as wasted years, but a time of stimulating activity and high creation. Nor will those years ever die. Gaines himself has a dozen copies of every EC comic ever published, as well as the original artwork. Dedicated collectors have complete and near complete collections, accumulated over periods of years at considerable expense. And when something can't and won't die, it *must* be great.

The EC era, a tangible fragment of the human spirit; I'm glad I lived when it happened.



EC Panel, from L to R:
Bill Gaines
Joe Orlando
E. Nelson Bridwell
Russ Cochran
Roger Hill

THE WERTHAM PANEL: WHY IT FAILED

Report by Bob Zimmerman

Left: Gerard Geary, right: Phil Seuling

Any comic fan who hears the name Fredric Wertham automatically feels an impulse to jeer. Wertham represents to every comic fan the illogical, the unfair, the over-generalized, and the inaccurate. He led to the destruction of innumerable comic companies and to the overwhelming fatalism that pervades the comic industry over the last fifteen years. Unfortunately, most fans know little beyond this about the subject. I suppose one of the purposes of the Wertham Panel was to clarify the subject to the fans. Since the discussion was called, "Was Wertham Right After All?" its main purpose must have been partly this. Whatever the purpose of the panel, nothing of any value occured. It was a complete failure.

Phil Seuling gave his usual 15-minute introduction of Gerard Geary, which was followed by Geary's own 10-minute speech on the subject of violence in comics. It was extremely interesting; many of his ideas were penetrating and intelligent. He asked for the removal of violence in comics. And in its stead, he pleaded for "...more artwork that is pleasing to the eye and more stories that are pleasing to the spirit."

Unfortunately, Geary dealt more with generalities and emotions, than he did with facts and specifics. He complained about the violence in EC Comics even though EC has not existed in that form in almost fifteen years. He complained about the blood and gore in Warren Publications but Warren's sales figures are miniscule in comparison to Marvel's or National's

Geary stated that violence in art and comics was wrong. This is good. Unfortunately, he felt that *all* violence was wrong. He called Shakespeare a "craftsman" because he used violence in his plays to a certain maintained degree. This is taking the idea to a ridiculous extreme.

None of these facts could have ruined the panel discussion to the degree it was wrecked by Geary. He had a sound idea and he attempted to tell us about it. Regretably, he only tried to tell us. During the question-and-answer period, it became evident that Geary would not listen to anyone. He would constantly interrupt people to hop on a point that he could destroy them with, without actually listening to what they were saying. A man would talk of getting frustrations out in comics and Geary would say, "So you think it's alright to get the better of somebody else?" Another person would explain that the reason a collector buys an EC includes the issue number, the artist, the writer, the specific comic title, and the year. Geary would then say that it's because a collector likes to look at the pictures that glorify violence.

To emphasize this inability to listen, I shall quote from the letter Mr. Geary sent with the transcript of his speech:

'Any letters defending violence will be 'positively' ignored. However, I will pray that the Lord will help you see the light." *[The quotation marks within the quote are not the product of the author of this article]*

Geary, like Dr. Wertham, had many very good ideas but he could not listen or compromise and therefore failed to achieve anything which could benefit us all. The most unfortunate fact of it all was that, although Geary had something different and intelligent to say, he prevented its communication to the fans.

WILL EISNER'S

THE SPIRIT: A SLIDE SHOW

Report by BILL WILSON

Illustration by DENNIS FUJITAKE

Certainly one of the most interesting, enjoyable, and educational events of the con, *for me at least,* was the slide show by John Benson of some of Will Eisner's finest work on THE SPIRIT. The one important thing which made it so was the fact that John managed to pick out some of the best-rendered and most amusing of Eisner's (and others') work on the strip from its beginning on June 2, 1940.

Besides merely showing the audience selected strips and panels, John managed to inject humor and interesting oddities and facts as he went along. For instance, one of the first slides was of the very first SPIRIT strip. If you happen to have that valuable piece of nostalgia locked up in a vault somewhere, check to see if Denny Colt wears a mask. *He doesn't.* However, when the page was reproduced in POLICE COMICS, a mask was added, and also the introductory panel was lengthened to conform to the change in size.

Emphasis in the slide show was placed on Eisner's odd angles, flashy splash panels and his use of newspaper headlines and the like in getting his point across. John remarked that, although Eisner was not an excellent artist, he was an excellent *storyteller.* And, although Eisner managed to come up with some fantastically intricate splash panels and actually made his characters come to life in his stories, I'd have to agree with John that he was a much better storyteller. His ability to keep a storyline constantly moving by utilizing his now-famous odd angle shots and even his poetic prologues and humor have had a very noticeable and excellent effect on many of today's artists, Jim Steranko for one, but there are many, many others.

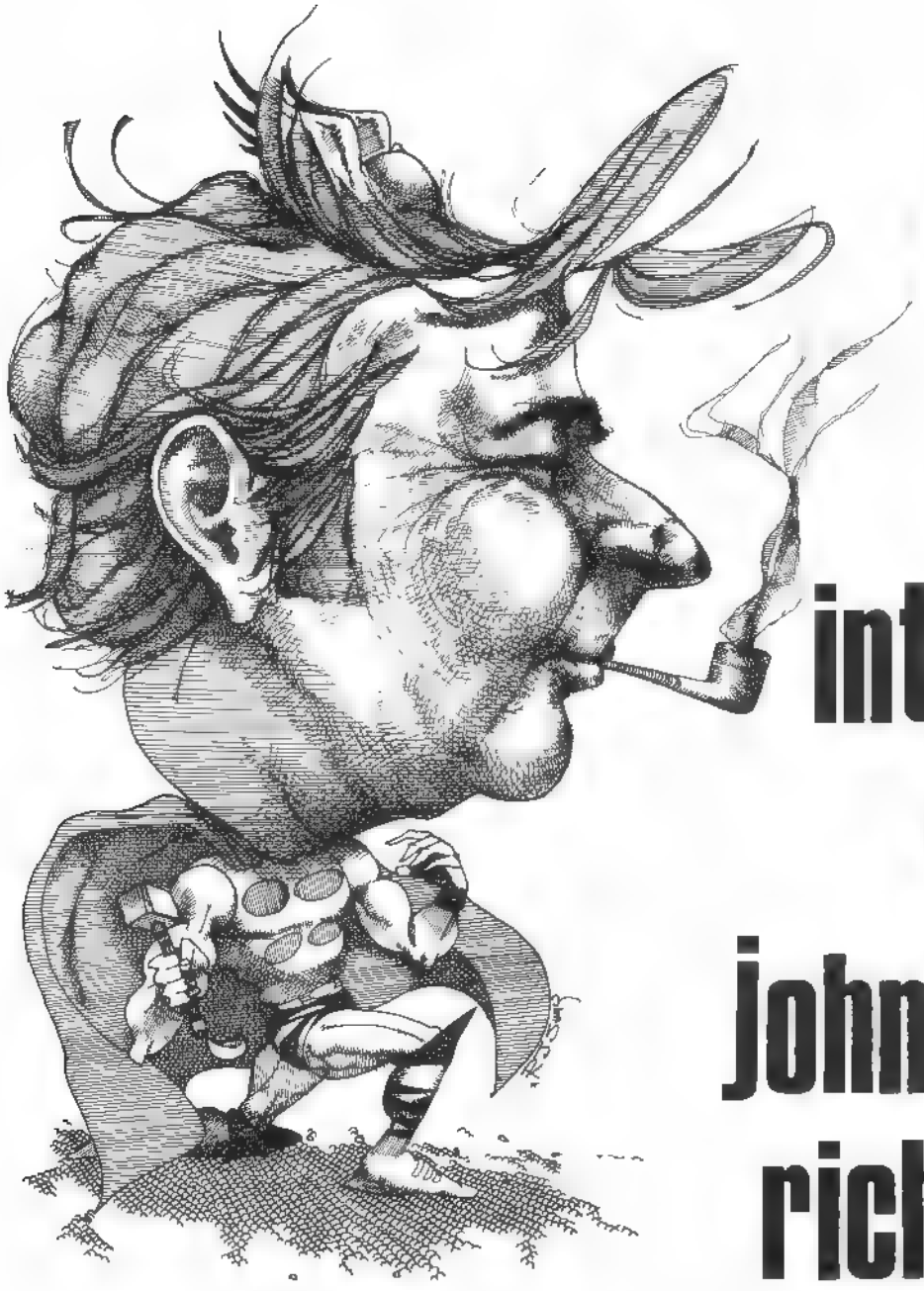
Although Eisner's work was most emphasized, a considerable amount of time and a number of slides concentrated on artists who worked under him and with him on some of the strips, both on THE SPIRIT *and* on the back-up features in the Sunday SPIRIT section. Worthy of mentioning are Bob Powell, who worked on Mr. Mystic, a four-page back-up feature; Nick Cardy and Klaus Nordling, who both worked on the LADY LUCK strip; Lou Fine, who handled THE SPIRIT while Eisner went to the army; Jerry Grandenetti; and Jules Feiffer, who added a dash of wit and humor in a back-up feature in THE SPIRIT section. These, men, fine artists all, were the tools used to make THE SPIRIT Sunday sections of the past so memorable today.

Unfortunately, the gradual downfall of the SPIRIT sections was also covered, following the shift to an eight page SPIRIT strip, then the change-over to only a frequent SPIRIT strip, and finally the drastic and terrible storyline switch to the adventures of Denny Colt in outer space.

But, aside from this, the slide show did much to preserve the name of Will Eisner in the annals of comicdom history and to give fans who may not have been that familiar with THE SPIRIT and/or Eisner the chance to see the excellent way in which the strip was handled.

No other comic strip deserved such an excellent presentation. Will Eisner's THE SPIRIT was *definitely* one of the best.

FUJITAKE '71



an interview with john adkins richardson

Title Illustration by R. SHAY

Conducted by GARY GROTH

GARY: Could you give us a breakdown of your life - your boyhood interests, etc.?

JOHN: I grew up in Wyoming, in the shade of the Big Horn Mountains. My father was a left wing, atheistic optometrist. My mother had been governess to the New York Jewish millionaire Farber family during the twenties. These are the sort of backgrounds to set a family apart from most in the west. To make matters worse my home town was very conservative. In 1942 Walter Winchell cited it as the most "pro-facist" community in the U.S. It had a population of about 4,000 and wasn't even heavily German. Anyhow, as a child, an only child, I led a rather abnormal existence; I wasn't altogether exiled, but I wasn't exactly popular either. I was sort of a one boy minority group. But I had a lot of time to read and draw.

At about age nine I began to interest myself in comic strips. I started producing stack after stack of related drawings and it was not long before my few friends began to take an avid interest in the stories I developed. I then began including my peers in the strips as various personna — sometimes as heroes sometimes as villains — and this gave me the position of a sort of Tom Sawyer in the day to day adventures of the elementary school. I was not only the creator and sustainer of this world of space ships, pony express riders, and hooded supermen, but I was the director of action in every game of "cops 'n' robbers." Eventually, the robbers became figments of the imagination and every playmate a hero. Having usurped the direction of the games and also some of the major roles (though always being careful to let others excell in the physical prowess of ordinary heroes) I maintained my position by the continual production of new fictions. I had to read voraciously to secure fresh material and by the age of twelve I had left in my bibliographical wake everything from Mark Twain to Tom Swift, from Jack London to H. G. Wells, Dumas Pere to Howard Pyle. I had, by then, read R. L. Stevenson, Leslie Charteris, Kipling, Burroughs, and others. And all of the time I was immersed in the realm of "The Justice Society of America," "Batman" and so forth. Which should lay to rest for all time the muddle-headed notion that comic books distract children from the so-called "better things." Matter of fact, I taught myself to read from the "funnies" in the Denver Post.

GARY: Where were you when EC needed you? One of Wertham's points was that comic books interfered with reading skills.

JOHN: SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT came out in 1954? I was already involved with the beginnings of this damned Viet Nam thing. I was illustrator for CINCPAC Intelligence. And the Commander in Chief of the

Pacific was part of a tripartite military group made up of the French, British, and Americans. My unit, which published a top-secret intelligence magazine, could see even then that what the Viet Namese were most interested in was removing *any* foreign prescence from their land. I was thunderstruck when Johnson —! Oh well, this is far from the subject.

GARY: Given all of this background, I'll bet your life goal is to go "pro" and illustrate a comic. Right?

JOHN: For a living? Draw comic books? You must be insane. I used to *be* a commercial artist. That sort of thing will turn your brains to gruel. Back in the '50's when I was still slick at turning out trademarks [Fig. 1] pictures of consumers wearing manic smiles, and so on [Fig. 2] I had some opportunities to do a little strip work. But it is too demanding for the pay . . unless things have improved a helluva lot. But, of course, you already know how I feel about this.

GARY: Yeah, but like many of your feelings, it's sort of unusual for a BNF.

JOHN: "Big Name Fan" ... Now *there* is a modest level of celebration for you! Fandom should be fun, not something made up of amateurish trade journals. But let me answer your question. I'm afraid comics would become a crashing bore if one had to do them day in and day out. One of the most accomplished cartoonists in the business, Stan Drake, said that doing comic strips is empty of challenge after a time. And, after all, given the centuries of experiment and application -- first by the fine artists, then by illustrators who lift their stuff, and finally by cartoonists -- it isn't suprising that figure composition poses few problems for anyone working a representational style, given a measure of talent and a lot of experience. Of course, I don't mean that every panel by Drake will be perfected composition like a Litchenstein --

GARY: Litchenstein? *Roy* Litchenstein? The guy who makes gigantic paintings by copying comic strip panels? Hell, I think Drake is better.

JOHN: His stuff is more appealing, sure. But compare Figure 3 and Figure 4. In Litchenstein's *Brattata* [Fig. 3] the balloon has been revised to correspond more closely in shape with the pilot's visor and the stem has been brought into harmony with the recurring forms that are in the picture. Also the onomatopoeic "brattata" has been given greater dominance and has been tilted more, tilted so that it counterbalances the mass of the falling plane. The strip panel [Fig. 4] is more "realistic" perhaps. But so far as composition goes, the Litchenstein wins hands down. (Incidentally, I have "lifted" this analysis from an article in the Winter 1968 69 Art Journal by an outstanding young art historian, Albert Boime. I recommend it to all comic art fans.) Commercial artists don't have time to fuss around with formal composition; their audience wouldn't appreciate it anyhow.

GARY: You seem to give the fine artists tremendous importance whenever you are interviewed. Did you read what Neal Adams said during the Keynote at the July Fourth NYC Comicon in the Metro Con I Program Book?

JOHN: Yes. Mr. Adams' position is quite typical of working commercial illustrators. He resents the connotations of the term "fine art" because there's very little of it that he considers any good. I understand the reaction very well because when I do serious painting it is often "put down" as mere illustration by birds who couldn't draw a foreshortened arm if their lives depended on it. But Adams was speaking off-the-cuff and imprecisely. He's not really "zinging" Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Sargent, or Andy Wyeth is he? No, it's modern art that annoys him, not the classical tradition of which his own style is a diminished version. (Wonder what he thinks of Larry Rivers, probably one of the finest draughtsmen around today?) I think his is a slightly wrong-headed view. The best painter I know personally is an abstractionist, Mike Smith. And Mike can draw rings around most realists when he wants to. Still, Adams' intuition is not altogether wrong. There is plenty of fraudulence and con-artistry in the fine arts field. But the situation is an extremely complicated one. The autumn issue of The British Journal of Aesthetics has an article by me dealing with some aspects of this matter. In it I'm challenging the orthodox criticism that had tended to support the kind of thing that I gather Adams hates. But Adams isn't the best proponent of his position; the best I can think of off-hand is Burne Hogarth. I used to see him in New York ---!

GARY: You *knew* Burne Hogarth?

JOHN: Oh, very casually. He was at the School for Visual Arts than and a friend of mine at Columbia University knew him. Hogarth struck me as a very intelligent articulate person. That he had drawn "Tarzan" didn't even register with me until much later. I was studying surrealist painting with Federico Castellon of Pratt Institute then, and the comics were far beneath my notice of so serious a thinker as I presumed myself to be. (I was all of twenty-five at the time, you see.) Anyhow, I knew better than to admit any interest in comic strips.

But the thing is that Hogarth was deeply troubled by the art scene, which at that time was utterly dominated by Abstract Expressionists like Jackson Pollock and Grace Hartigan (a very nice lady, by the way.) He thought that abstraction had emerged from a divorce between art and science, that even such fantastic talents as Picasso and Paul Klee were representatives of a failure to cope with moral and social needs. Some great intellectuals — notably Thomas Mann and Georg Lukacs have argued essentially this, too. But I also am something of an authority in precisely this area and I believe that they are wrong. However, I don't want to get into so high brow a contest here. What "got" me was that later, in 1965, he published a book on life-drawing, DYNAMIC ANATOMY, which is full of useful information and insights but is also illustrated by figures [Fig. 5] so schematized as to be grotesque. When you contrast what Burne did with what his idols of the Renaissance (or even the Academicians of the nineteenth-century) did you can see how far from the tradition he had moved. Yet, as a cartoonist he was remarkable, frequently his Sunday pages were rather accomplished polyptych compositions.

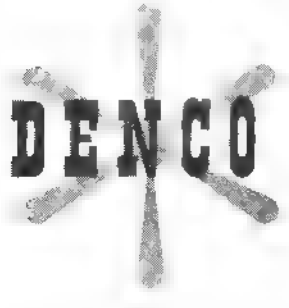


FIG. 1

FIG. 2

FIG. 3

FIG. 4

GARY: Poly-w h a a a t?

JOHN: Polyptych. Many-paneled. Like the Ghent Altarpiece by the van Eycks.

GARY: Oh sure . . . Uh, frankly, I think you're drifting away from what fans are interested in.

JOHN: Probably. The fans are always saying things that drive me up the walls. Their views and tastes sometimes strike me as of an indescribable shallowness. For instance, somewhere I read an article in which a fan said that Frazetta created masterpieces equal to those of Michael-

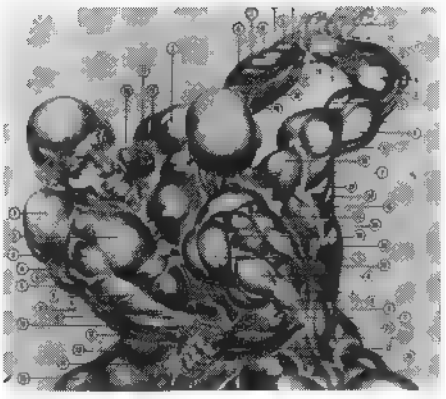


FIG. 5

angelo, Leonardo and Picasso. Whew! Frank is a good man -- a *very* good man -- but his name ought not to be mentioned in the same breath with those. His style grows out of a Baroque academic tradition that would not even exist without the Italians. And Picasso's conceptual abilities, up to the 1950's anyhow, were so far beyond those of ordinary artists as to be absolutely uncanny. Look at this drawing [Fig. 6]. I could do as well. So could a couple of my freshmen drawing students. Obviously, Frazetta also could. Except for one small thing. Picasso did it when he was twelve years old! And what he did at six looks like the work of a modestly talented teen-ager. I shouldn't make an issue, but I have encountered this sort of comment so often in fanzines that I couldn't resist.

GARY: Alright, alright, for God's sake! Picasso is a greater artist than Frazetta. Okay?

JOHN: Okay. I didn't mean to ---!

GARY: Well, this isn't THE JOURNAL OF AESTHETIC EDUCATION you know.

JOHN: Ah ha! For *them* I wrote a review of books on comic books. Maybe I'm just perverse. In that review I talked about fandom.

GARY: Oh joy! We've finally "made it." What'd you say?

JOHN: I said that SOCERLID was "the most estimable tip of a vast international phenomenen called 'fandom' whose massive base reaches deep into the waters of near illiteracy." Understand, though, that I had already said that I thought Couperie and Horn had made a commentary of matchless precision and completeness. And I gave the Steranko book a good review. But I had to indicate the range of fanzines

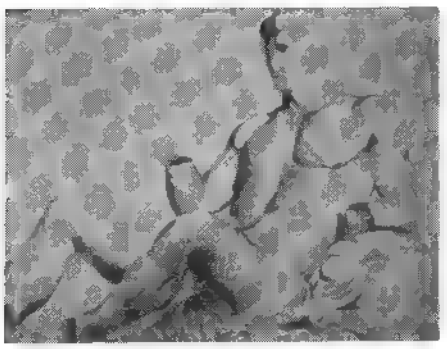


FIG. 6

in order to explain about ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME. (It's of no real interest to a true comic art fan, and it is overpriced, but it should be worth the money to nostalgia buffs).

GARY: About fanzines. What ones do you like?

JOHN: The only one I've seen that I really like without reservation is WITZEND. It combines in a way no other magazine in the field does, style, felicity of expression, and a wonderful catholicity of taste. To find in one issue, number 6 something as self-consciously elegant as Jeff Jones' "Alien" and as delightfully funky as Carika's "Quamb" is refreshing indeed.

GARY: And I'll bet your favorite issue is number 8, right?

JOHN: Thanks for the plug. It contains my eight-page "Lewis Carroll's 'The Hunting of the Snark' as an Augury of Some Distant Future." Also some Frazetta, Ditko, and Wood. But the real "kick" is a strip by Bill Pearson and Ralph Reese called "Barf, the Insurance Man" which makes reference back to "Quamb." I'm proud to be in this company.

GARY: I saw the original drawings for "Snark" and I thought they were beautiful.

JOHN: Thanks. It's a cut above my earlier fan work. I did it for an underground literary magazine whose editors, with the strategic sense so common to the newer left, sedulously worked their ways into jail just prior to publication. So it was a sort of "pro" job. And it did inspire me to do "Maxor of Cirod" which G.B. Love brought out as FANTASTIX EXPLOITS # 21. It has been very well received

GARY: Yeah, some comic strip! Even Rich Corben said it was "outstanding!"

JOHN: He thought the drawing was okay, but what really appealed to him was the writing. And I don't think there can be too much question that "Maxor" is an unusually literate comic strip. Matter of fact, Washington University in St. Louis is going to use it as supplementary reading in some of the freshmen composition courses.

GARY: Best of all, it only costs $1.25! I couldn't believe it! Imagine G.B. Love charging only ---!

JOHN: Oh, knock it off with that jive! You and Martin ought to be ashamed of yourselves, constantly attacking the guy. He and I went out of our way to keep the cost of FANTASTIC EXPLOITS # 21 down as low as possible. But it was his idea to set the $1.25 figure, not mine. I accomodated myself to it.

GARY: [Sound of teeth gritting] Why do you *always* defend him? I mean, y'know, he's okay. But those prices, the strikeovers...

JOHN: They're annoying to some and of no importance to others. I kid him about the strikeovers, but he must be doing something right; people continue to buy and no one is holding a gun to their heads to do so.

GARY: I'm hoping that Alan Light's BUYER'S GUIDE slices into about 75% of the RBCC's readership.

JOHN: Well, Alan is a fine lad and I wish him all success with his adzine and with ALL DYNAMIC if he revives it. But I think you'll be disappointed. Obviously, the free-subscription ad-supported adzine is the most desirable way to operate from the fan's point-of-view. But it has been tried before and the RBCC has always surmounted the opposition. So perhaps the desirably route is not the feasible one. In any case, I'd not wish ill fortune upon G.B.

GARY: What am I? Apokolips? It's just that he's too successful, given the product.

JOHN: What you mean is that you don't like the saleability of a product of which you disapprove. Well, that's capitalism for you. I get tired of hearing people knock the guy for making a living. I mean the cost difference among 'zines are pretty trivial, given inflation and all. No one's perfect, but he isn't pulling a Rogofsky or anything. And with him it isn't just a hobby. Don Newton and I have spent a lot of time thinking about this. If we thought G.B. was a "rip off" artist, we wouldn't have anything to do with him.

GARY: Well, let's not argue about it. Don Newton and you are good friends I gather.

JOHN: We agree on quite a few things. About fandom, that is. I don't know anything about his ideas on politics or fine art, for instance. But I like the way he draws. He's a thoroughly nice guy. And, like me, he has his hands into all sorts of different activities.

GARY: What about other fan artists?

JOHN: Well, as Bob Kline pointed out, it's easy to spiel off a list of good ones just because the few trained artists and young talents who do this nonsense stand out rather startlingly. Newton, Corben, Kline . . . you know the list. There are always the same names. I prefer those who don't take this stuff too seriously. If Kline's strips were done with the obsessive care of his illustrations they'd be immensely diverting. He should have Strnad or someone write a story line around some of those incongrous lizards he does. Oh, speaking of lizards, Vaughn Bode' is terrific! And Corben's FANTAGOR

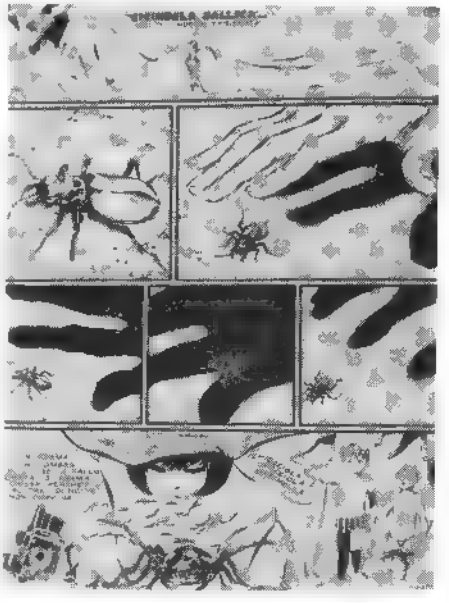


FIG. 7

is fine. Rich has a pleasantly irrascible side. Well, I'm not going to mention anymore fan, semi-pro artists. I'm bound to leave someone out and it's just as well not to slight people unintentionally. Intentionally is fine.

GARY: What professional comic artists do you most admire?

JOHN: I can't really answer the question in that form. Let me break it down. Who do I think is the greatest of all time? George Herriman, hands down, no question, no contest. In fact, I think "Krazy Kat" may actually *be* high art. It's so good, I can't understand how it ever became popular. Winsor McCay is a struggling second with "Little Nemo." Great art, I love it, but McCay wasn't the authentic genuis that Herriman was

But knowing you, you are asking about the adventure stuff. Above them all I admire Alex Raymond. And Foster for his settings and landscape detail. Of course, I like Hogarth's idea of composing the entire page. Two strips that I've always liked are Godwin's, "Connie" and Miller's, 'Barney Baxter."

But pay attention to what I'm about to say.

GARY: Yes, Professor.

JOHN: Good. The comics are a very specialized racket. One of the best illustrators around is Austin Briggs, far better than Alex Raymond ever was. But when Briggs did 'Flash Gordon" dailies and the Sunday page after Raymond went into the Marines, he never really captured the peculiar quality of the strip. I used to think the strip people would look punk if artists like Bob Peake or Bernie Fuchs ever took up comics as a form. I mean if they went into it with the same intense interest in the form that someone like Hogarth had. The only character of this calibre who ever turned out his hand to it was Noel Sickles, and he revolutionized the entire adventure strip with that inking. Foster is sort of similar, but his renderings are pretty straight adaptations of Howard Pyle's Knighthood-in flower things. Still, I'm probably wrong anyhow. After all, Briggs wasn't as good as Raymond on Raymond's own turf.

GARY: So there aren't any professionals working today that you admire, huh?

JOHN: Sure there are. I even like Frazetta, Wood and Williamson. I do hhave the feeling that Stan Drake accomplishes most with the greatest economy of means in the realistic strips; he conveys great subtleties of expression, considering the grosseness of the medium. And I have always loved Milt Caniff's work. As for newer names, and putting aside the Mort Walkers, Charles Schulzes, Walt Kelleys, and so on (as if they could be pluralized), I'm most impressed right now by a long hair and an italian. Rick Griffin and Guido Crepax [Fig. 7].

GARY: You sure range around. What do you teach? I mean, I guess everyone by now knows that you are *Dr.* Richardson, and a full Professor at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville. And that you publish in scholarly journals and write books 'n' stuff.

JOHN: Well, I used to teach painting, copperplate engraving, and etching, along

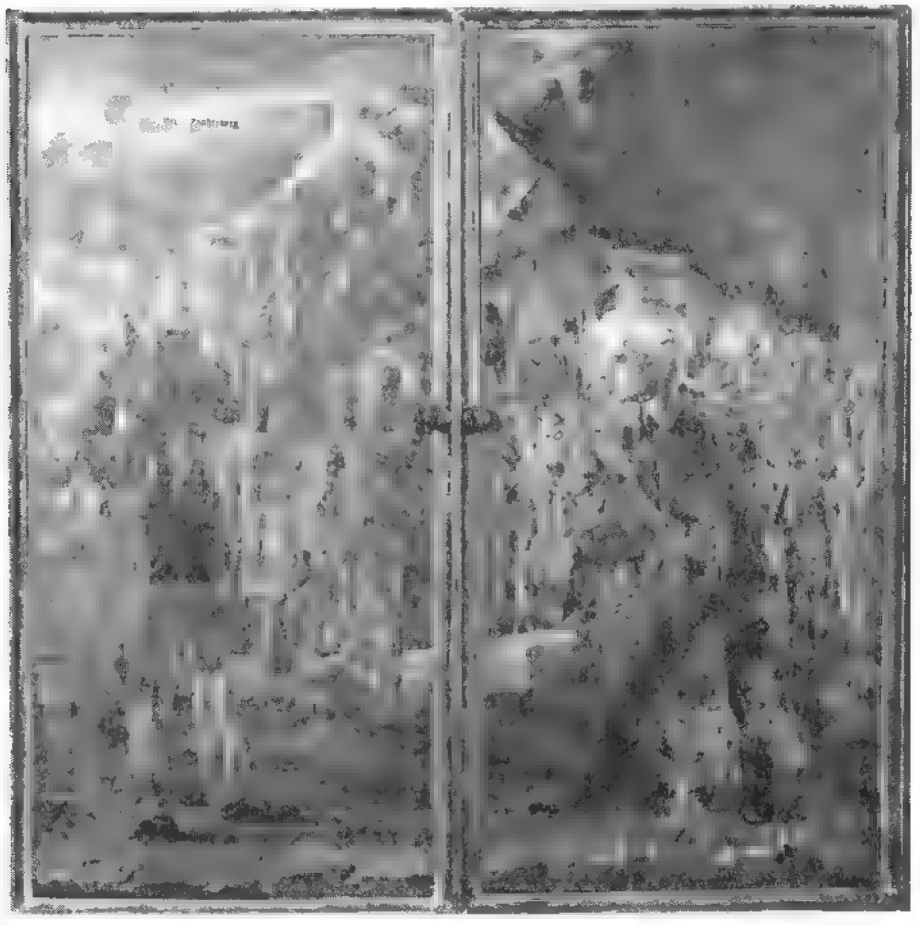


FIG. 8

FIG. 10

with my favorite subject, history of modern art. But I became allergic to lots of things used in the graphic arts. And the technical expertise has increased alarmingly within the last decade. So now I move around in art history, drawing, and painting. Just now I'm teaching art history, freshmen life drawing, and some graduate-level painting.

GARY: What sort of work do you do when you're not drawing comics?

JOHN: Much better artwork I guess. But maybe I'm wrong. (I'm a much better critic and teacher than I am an artist. I pride myself on being able to see that this is true.) Anyhow, here's an oil triptypch (three panel painting) called *Der Zauberberg: An Altarpiece For Modern Times* [Fig. 8]. The German means "Magic Mountain" and the two characters are antagonists from Thomas Mann's novel of that name. The people in the background represent all that I detest from either the left wing or the right. When it's open [Fig. 9] it looks like this. The modern world coming down around our ears. Reminds college kids of Chicago during the Democratic Convention. But I painted it before that. Even then the polarization of opinion in the U.S. resembled what was going on in Germany during the twenties and thirties. Here's another called *Right Wing* [Fig. 10]. The face is split into four segments. Going from upper left, clockwise: a Prussion general, Ayn Rand, Barry Goldwater, Douglas MacArthur. And here [Fig. 11] is the latest direction -- nostalgic portraiture. It's all painted -- no collage -- but using images of things related to the sitter's past. This, of course, is of me and my family.

GARY: Is your stuff always this, uh -- literary?

JOHN: Oh, no. I do watercolor landscapes too, This is of a big lake in Idaho [Fig. 12].

GARY: It's completely different.

JOHN: Yes. That's partly deliberate. Everything I do is adjunct to my teaching and I like to try out different things so that I won't get into a rut and impose my own narrow vision upon all of the students. They've a right to their own directions, their own "thing" as it were. The watercolors, as it happens, are very saleable items. At one time I had to decide whether to become a professional

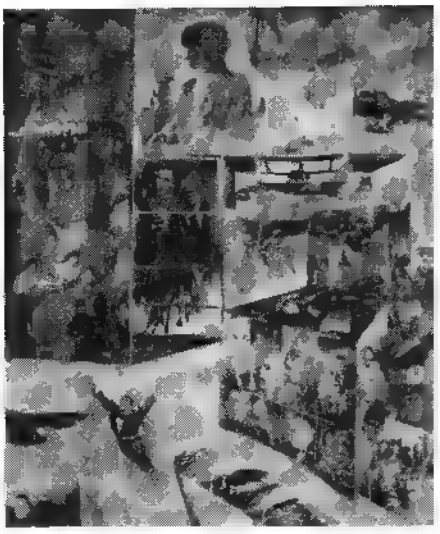


FIG. 11

FIG. 12

watercolorist under contract to an international gallery operation or whether to finish my doctorate. I decided that the latter was more secure. But I still sell an occasional watercolor. In fact I sold a couple last week.

GARY: What do they go for?

JOHN: One was $280 and the other $175.

GARY. Not bad. How long does it take to do one?

JOHN: Including preparatary sketches, doing a couple of flops, 'n' so on, about three or four hours. That's about as long as it takes me to do a black and white acrylic painting for a fanzine or to do a moderately elaborate drawing like the Maxor panel that was in FANTASTIC FANZINE # 13. Naturally, the watercolors are much finer than the illos. They are more unique, more accomplished, and generally on a higher plane. But you may imagine my astonishment to observe the price range at fan auctions. Given the intense interest I had rather supposed the bids would be in the $35 to $100 range rather than in the $5 to $20 bracket. In this respect the Oklahoma City Multicon was a real revelation to me.

GARY: Is that why you gave them most of the money you earned from that auction?

JOHN: Oh, it appeared that things weren't going well for the sponsors in terms of total income. So I was being noble. And I didn't give them "most" of the money, just a sizeable chunk. But fair is fair. Had I been able to sell the illustrations for more money I'd have kept a larger percentage for myself. Actually, I did very well, breaking even on expenses. Many dealers were in the red. That wasn't OAF's fault. It was the first ripple of recession touching fandom.

GARY: What do you think of comic conventions?

JOHN: They are quite comical. I've attended only one. And I think my reactions were made perfectly clear in the report I did for you in FF # 13.

GARY: Well, then, do you plan on attending any more cons?

JOHN: Sure. I plan on attending one of yours sometime. And a long-time chum of mine, Louis Trimble who writes the "Anthropoi" stories for Ace Paperbacks, thought we might go together to one of the Sci-Fi conventions. The trouble with most of the cons is that they occur during the months when I am teaching summer term at the University. They seem never to fall between sessions. And it's hard to convince my Dean that going to look at a bunch of old comic books is in the same category with sitting at the College Art Association meeting and listening to a slide lecture on stylistic problems in the drawings of Claude Lorrain or some such thing.

GARY: I thought that you originally became involved in fandom by way of a very respectably, University-approved research project.

JOHN: True. But funding for research is very tight right now and likely to remain so for the forseeable future. And I'm in a peculiar ethical bind. I am president of the University Senate at SIU and past chairman of the University Research Committee. Clearly, it would be bad form to take money away from something like ecological research to support Richardson's fascination with popular art forms. I'm still working on the project, but the University sponsorship has been terminated. The topic is not comics *per se*, incidentally. I'm just using them as a point of departure for a study of the dynamics of taste in fine art and popular art.

GARY: Say, you didn't mention it, but do you teach cartooning at all? I mean, this guy Shay who did the caricature that heads this piece is a student of yours, isn't he?

JOHN: Yes, but he's self-taught as far as caricature is concerned. And I suppose you'd call him a pro; he does political cartoons for newspapers. Anyhow, our art department is very fine arts oriented. And we have on the University staff a guy named Walter Kemper who is a real star as a designer-illustrator [Fig. 13]. Why should I teach what little commercial art there is to be taught when this bird is on hand? As for cartooning, when students who are fans come by for advice I'm willing to assist them in their endeavors.

GARY: But they must sometimes annoy you?

JOHN: The only fans who really annoy me are some of the fanzine editors. They are always after free work. I'm pleased to give it if the 'zine is good and the request is even reasonably courteous. But I'm aghast at the number of scrawled notes (typically full of misspellings, with the return address on the envelope and not even an SASE enclosed) that come across my desk in a given week from clowns seeking "freebies." I *always* acknowledge requests if I possible can. Which is more than many artists do. But many editors don't bother even to notify you that they've received work. And, of

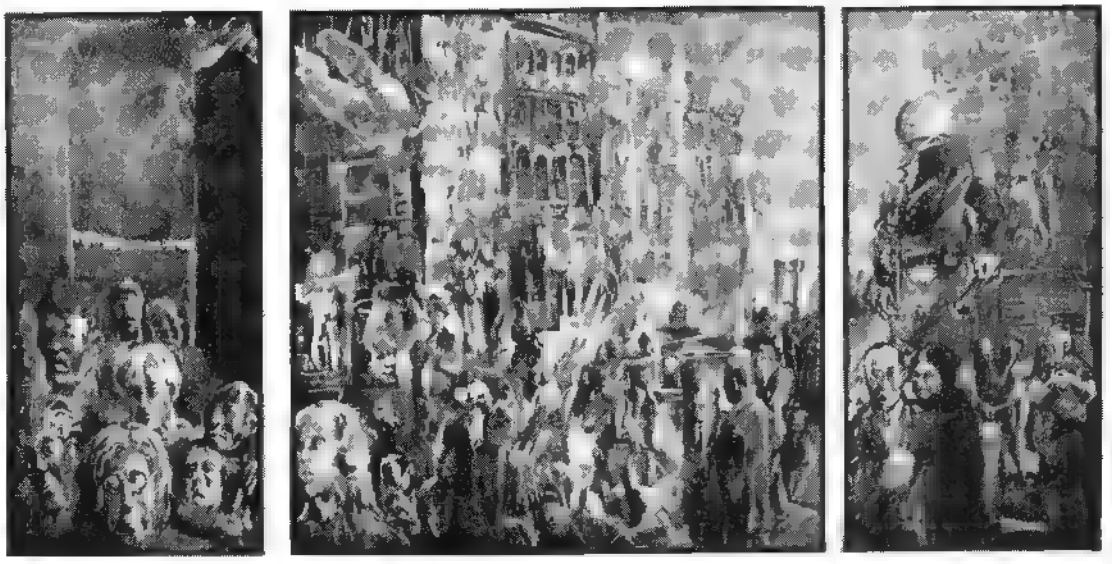


FIG. 9.

FIG. 13

course, there was the fanzine that reproduced a sort of doodle I did with an old Buck Rogers premium ink pad stamp as my work, even listing it in the table of contents.

GARY: Yeah, I heard about that. That was in --?

JOHN: Forget it. It's all gone by. And the later issues of the 'zine are pretty good. Anyhow, I'm so gratified by a gracious approach -- and I must say that you, Martin Greim, Alan Light, and Bill Wilson are outstanding in this regard -- that I will usually go out of my way to respond. But, of course, there is only so much that can be done.

GARY. You do work incredibly fast. I know that from personal experience.

JOHN: I have to. But, even so, I try not to be too sloppy. Many of the youngsters who do fan work are terribly careless and altogether lacking in the capacity for self-criticism. Some of the ads in RBCC actually tug at my heartstrings. Here is some poor kid offering his work "cheap" just to get in a 'zine. And it is so hideous that he could probably not pay anyone to take it. He can't see how awful it is because he doesn't know the first thing about drawing; all he's ever done is copy other people's comic strips -- and probably with a pen instead of a brush. And on typing paper.

GARY: Hear! Hear! And if an editor sends back this stuff, the "artist" then is really infuriated. Well, not really. Some time ago, it used to be like that. If I sent somebody's stuff back, chances were that he would be infuriated, and actually threaten to submit it to other 'zines. Anyone who'll use it is no competition for FANTAGRAPHICS, I'll tell you that.

JOHN: Really? That stuff must be *really* bad.

GARY: Ha. Ha. After I put a little note about this in FF 11's editorial, the attitude of fan artists, whose work I had to reject, was very pleasant. I try to give some basic advice to those fan artists who look like they can use it, and most of them write back telling me their drawings are improving just by using the correct material. It's very gratifying to know you've helped someone out a little.

JOHN: Well, learning to draw is difficult, particularly, if one is living in a tiny town somewhere and has no decent instruction. (Of course, exceptional talent will overcome all obstacles).

GARY: How do your students do?

JOHN: Oh, okay. I'm very middle-of-the-roadish and perhaps overly tolerant of variations. Here's a sampling of paintings, prints, and drawings. It is a random sampling, really. Not the best of the best, but what I happen to have photographs of [FIGS. 14-18]. Quite a few of 'em are cropped, too. But it gives you an idea...

GARY: I see what you meant about not imposing your visions on the students.

JOHN: One of my pet peeves of the class in which everyone does precisely as the master does. But it doesn't matter whether you make everyone do it alike or try to inspire individual direction, the fact remains that one cannot learn to draw only by copying drawings. At some point - whether you are on your own or in an art school - you have to begin working from reality. And drawing, by the way, has nothing to do with manual dexterity, it has to do with knowing how to see. I always start out my art appreciation classes by drawing a portrait head with a felt marker held in my teeth. Figure 19 is an example of one. It's shaky, but it isn't amatuerish. I do know the porportions, the shape of the skull, where the sternomastoid muscles go, and so on. And in drawing courses I make a practice of at least once drawing my right hand with my left. I am right-handed. Again, it isn't good, but it isn't clumsy; the fingers'll be in the right porportions, etc.

GARY: Hands are very hard to draw. aren't they?

JOHN: There are tricks to it. For instance, the hand closes with the little finger going into the palm first and the others following on up in sequence. The index and middle fingers and the ring and little fingers tend to pair up in many hand postures. Each section of a finger is about 2/3rds the length of the preceding section, the thumb being an exception. Fingernails are normally 1/2 of the third section. And so on. There are a lot of gimmicks like this.Helpful information but not to be followed slavishly. You may have to radically revise porportions to attain some emotive or compositional end. You know, Steranko doesn't *have* to draw that way; he does it purposefully. Did you see my "Dr. Strange" cover for RBCC 80 ? [Fig. 20].

FIG. 14

GARY: Yes. Quite a job. Someone told me Love had more positive reaction to that cover than any ever.

JOHN: So I understand. Still, it contains plenty of deviations. For instance, the left arm looks disconnected from the body. But the forms work alright and most people would never notice the distortion. In a serious painting I'd have made other adjustments instead; modified a highlight there, eliminated a section here, definitely lowered the window. But the printed cover accomplished what is necessary

FIG. 17

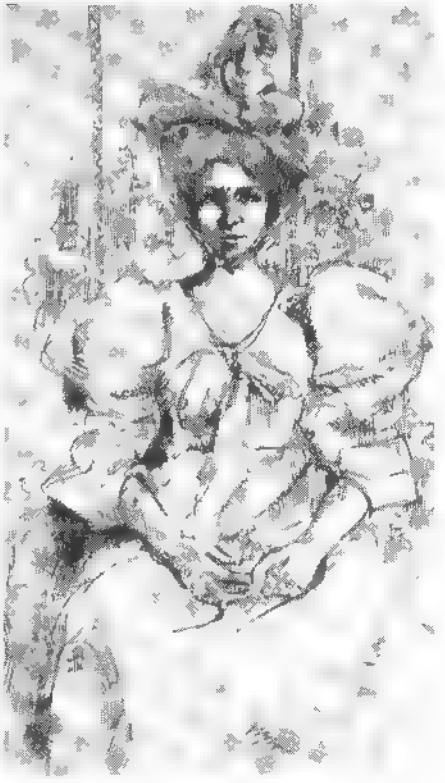


FIG. 16

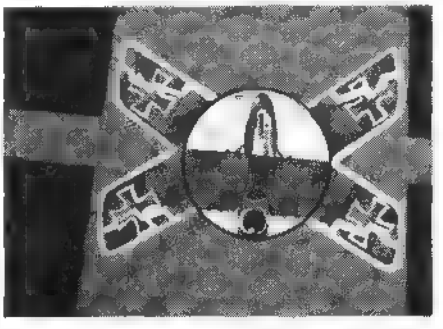


FIG. 15

FIG. 18

for fandom.

GARY: You are so critical of your own work, I wonder what you think of today's comics. You do buy a substantial number, don't you?

JOHN: No. I rarely look at comic books except to buy them for my little boys or out of some special interest. The other day, for instance, I picked up a copy of Kirby's FOREVER PEOPLE just to see what he was up to. Good fun. But obviously another attempt to relate to the so-called "youth culture," to Consciousness Three, and make more money. The influence of some of the underground comics seems to be making itself felt there. And I'm all for it. But I can't really enjoy a commercial comic book much.

GARY: Obviously, you are a newspaper strip man. But what about the new comics as opposed to the Golden Age or Silver Age ones?

JOHN: Most of the old books were very crude, of course. That's obvious. The new lines are much more pretentious in terms of rendering and in terms of being "with it." That's partly the result of economics, surely. During the war, and after anyone who could tell a ruling pen from a stiff noodle could get a job as a spot illustrator for magazines and advertising companies. Much of that work has been replaced by various kinds of photographic

FIG. 19

conversations. So some skilled folk have been driven into the comics field. But the divisions of labor of the comics has always troubled me. I realize that it is necessary, but it makes it impossible to assess the work of any given artist. Adams' drawing is of no particular interest to me unless it is inked by Giordano in a special kind of way. Colan inked by Colletta is one thing and by Sinnott something else again. But none of this matters. So far as I'm concerned MAD COMICS was the apex.

GARY: Ah-ha! An EC fan!

JOHN: MAD COMICS only. The other titles were a dozen cuts above the usual comic pap, but they didn't particularly interest me. Given the nature of the comic strip medium it is difficult if not impossible to build character in a single story. So what the people in, say, WEIRD SCIENCE substituted was the kind of thing an adolescent mentality is apt to find "significant," The Ironic Twist of Fate. Story after story, issue upon issue, depend upon the device that figured so prominently in O. Henry and Saki. In de Maupassant, even Ray Bradbury, the old ITF doesn't become too cloying because the Twist isn't the whole raison d'etre for the story. But in marrial array for comic books the thing becomes tedious indeed. Still, what are you going to do? It was a better device than the same BEM versus the semi-nude blond and valiant spaceman repeated over and over ala Fiction House comics and pulps.

GARY: What were your favorite comic books when you were a small boy?

JOHN: "Captain Marvel" was the superhero who secured most of my loyalty. But I really looked forward to ALL STAR COMICS and the adventures of the JSA. (I was more enthralled by "Dr. Fate" than any of the others.) The comic title that always seemed the most mature to me in those days was Biro's DAREDEVIL. Biro's bad guys were really evil rascals and sometimes even little kids would be maimed or killed. It was always done in good taste, though, rather like the motion pictures might handle the death of Little Nell.

GARY: Of all the comic genres -- SF, S&S, Superhero, War, etc. -- which do you prefer?

JOHN: Satire. Mine usually have an SF, S&S, or Superhero theme, but the satirical angle is more important than the category.

GARY: In your introduction to "Maxor" in FANTASTIC EXPLOITS # 21 you seemed to sort of put down science fiction and fantasy in general. You said that even Vonnegut might be escapist, or words to that effect.

JOHN: No, I said that "it may well be that tastes for fantasy and/or science-fiction are in complicity with apathetic reactions to profound dilemmas of contemporary life, that even Kurt Vonnegut represents nothing but escape. I should not like to think it so. But if it is, then 'so it goes.'" Susan Sontag, among others has pointed out that science fiction has a tendency to neutralize the abhorrent. Thus "thinking the unthinkable" becomes, not the subject for calculation as in Herman Kahn, but the subject of mere fantasy. It is some kind of uneasy intersection between the serious and the irresponsible. Sword and Sorcery is quite different, really just a new version of the oldest romance of all -- the strong hero pitted against evil. You will notice that in "Maxor" there are no good guys or bad guys, only men whose ideologies are in opposition. The epistemological and metaphysical -- not to say ethical -- foundations of --!

GARY: Hold it! That's enough. FF's readers won't stand for any more of this! This may even be abuse ... who knows?

JOHN: I know. That's my point about the epistemo-

GARY: [CLICK!]

JOHN: --l-o g--i--c---a-- l fffff. .

FIG 20

The Void in the Universe

"If time and space are the same thing;
and a man falls over the edge.
God only knows, where he might land."

I The Void

What was legally defined as the universe had been explored and mapped shortly after the concept of limitless acceleration had become a reality. All planets possessing intelligent life, or capable of supporting life as we know it, had positioned via the space-probes or "star-hoppers." These computer-controlled robot ships traveled instantly to the furthest visable star, automatically scanned and catalogued its planets, then after relaying its information to central control, shot to the next comparatively described star. A highly practical and extremely dull method of space exploration.

The universal concept had finally emerged as a sphere-shaped conglomeration of stars, planets, satellites, and any other tangible material. Space-probes were constantly being dispatched away from the universal shell, reaching theoretical infinity almost instantly, and discovering nothing. Space exploration was at an end. Except for the voided zone. For the universe was not only a sphere, but a hollow sphere. Space probes had automatically avoided the area in their star-hopping flights. Later, deliberate attempts were made to penetrate the voided zone. Space-probes, sent in, failed to emerge on the opposite side. Even collision courses involving two or more probes failed to bring results. They simply ceased to exist when they neared the center of the voided zone. No explosion, no rebound, just -- nothing. Theories and counter-theories finally gave way to old fashioned arguments, resulting in the final decision to launch a *manned* exploration. And so, the last star ship stepped off into the last, unexplored pocket of space

The crew, all volunteers, included myself as captain, my logical and large earred second-in-command, and a few other former shipmates. Although the official log describes a relatively unexciting trek through uninhabited space, this, my personal journal, may prove more interesting if less believable.

II The Voyage

As the last, visable star winked out of sight behind us, we were immediately struck with the same, vague depression that plagued the early submarine crews. Traveling by instruments alone completely stymied all sensation of movement, although we were moving toward the exact center of the voided area with a speed almost equal to our fastest space-probes. In fact, minute space-probes preceded us, step-by-step, finding and reporting -- nothing. A preceding space-probe was slowed to match the speed of our star ship. The tiny dot of light on our viewing screens gave the illusion that a single star existed in this satan's pocket of blackness, and morale improved in spite of the fact that all hands knew the "star" for what it was.

At the half-way mark, we halted. Larger, more elaborate space probes were ejected, and like the others, disappeared near the theoretical center. Radio contact was spasmodic. In our standing position, radio range should have been unlimited; even though sending or receiving with central control was impossible at top speed. Finally, with the decision to proceed sent and confirmed, we desisted from further radio contact attempts. Before continuing, any relevant tapes, including last remarks from the crew, were placed in a courier-probe and sent back to our launching satelite. Since a returning probe's thrust and momentum would be cancelled by our ship's forward movement this would be our only attempt at carrier communication.

We were now proceeding to penetrate the void's center in a non-stop flight. Our phony star maintained its monotnous pace, leading us on and on. A special watch had been created to observe the preceding space-probe's behavior. But no such order was necessary. As our two ship formation neared the disappearing area, all crew members, not otherwise occupied, were intently watching the probe's progress on the many monitor screens throughout the ship. In the control room, all eyes were on the visible probe as it approached center-zero. I stood in the background, observing the reactions of these few crew members as well as the probe itself. Although there was no instrumental fluctuation, the probe glowed brightly, then disappeared. The crew stood still as statues; their only reaction was a total lack of reaction. I called for a course alteration. It was ignored. No one in the control room, except myself, seemed able to move. Moreover, their forms were becoming indistinct and hazy. I leaped to the control panel to personally change the direction of our flight least we meet the same fate as the probe. I could not touch a dial or move a lever. My hand penetrated the now transparent panel as easily as if it were smoke! And then I knew that it was not the crew and ship, but *I*, who was fade -- d-i-n-g. . .

III Kap'ten

I awoke. I'd had a nightmare; something about falling. The rich, green grass was like velvet beneath my back. The sun, though newly risen, was warm and welcome. I rolled over to my feet, stretching my nude body to its full height. How good it was to be young and alive. I moved downhill toward a small spring, feeling keenly aware of the powerful muscles working rhythmically to move my legs and transport my body. The joy of life was so strong within me that at the time I cared for nothing else. I drank, then bathed in the cool water. As I started toward a grove of fruit trees further down the shallow valley, I thought again about the dream. What was it. People, a machine, and falling. But I thought no more about it; she was waiting for me in the orchard.

She welcomed me, calling me, "Kap'ten," with a strange accent. Or strangely lacking any accent. But if she would call me, Kap'ten, then Kap'ten I would be. For six

STAR TREK
DAVE COCKRUM

days we wandered aimlessly through gardens and orchards of incredible beauty and richness. Although we often saw rainstorms at a distance, we were never subjected to harsh weather of any kind. No insects assailed our uncovered skin, and neither thorns nor thistles barred our way or pierced our feet. Nights and sometimes days, were spent in guiltless lovemaking, lying beneath majestic trees upon the soft, carpet-like grass.

On the seventh day we met the others. We were six in all, three males and three females. The day was spent much like a summer picnic. While our three lovely companions gathered and prepared an abundant feast, a brotherhood relationship was quickly formed by us men. I differed only slightly from my fellow males, and in the same way our mates differed. I was lighter in color than either. One was dark brown and powerfully built with black, kinky hair. The other's skin was a redish-tan; and his hair, while as dark as the first's, was straight like mine. In the friendly tests of strength that followed, the dark skinned "Jo'h" proved to be the most powerful. "Je'm" was the fastest runner, although I managed to stay ahead of the heavier Jo'h. The girls were an enthusiastic cheering section as we passed a pleasantly active day. I finally emerged the victor of an event by defeating both my fellow contestants in a free-style wrestling match. By pressing nerve points in a method of unarmed combat, not known to either, I managed to render first Jo'h and then Je'm momentarily helpless. Much to the delight of my pale companion. After lunch and a resting period, we walked a short distance to a crystal-clear lake. The girls joined in the swimming contest which quickly became a splashing contest; ending an enjoyable day with a delightful method of bathing. At nightfall each couple retreated to a private grove where we eventually slumbered. Shortly before sunrise, my flaxen-haired mate woke me, and led me from our thicket to the crest of a nearby hill. False dawn was breaking, and I could see the forms of the other two couples not far away, silhouetted by the grey, morning light. My companion directed my attention to a distant river, and beyond that, a sight which was unimaginable. A city, stretching across the horizon and further. A city of incredible beauty. Tall buildings of white marble and streets of gold. The sun's edge broke over the opposite horizon with dazzling suddeness. The light reflected from the city was too much for human eyes. As I turned away, she held me close, pressing my hand to her belly. I knew her meaning without words; in our few days together, she'd conceived. I drew her closer and tried again to look at the city. But the brightness was even more blinding. I closed my eyes. And when I opened them, the space-probe had disappeared from the control room's monitor.

IV Return and Recollection

My adjustment to the sudden realization that I was back in the star ship was immediate. I'd returned a split-second after my departure; with sufficient time to alter our suicidal course. This time, the crew obeyed instantly, and we were soon describing a circular path around the destructive area. Our first act was to determine its size. The destructive area was so vast, compared to the foreign matter that had thus far been introduced into its system, that the resultant dissimulations could only be detected from an extremely close distance. The totally annihilated material was distributed in a very minute energy-particles from countless points. Only a large planet entering the zone would have resulted in distribution-particles strong enough to be recorded on instruments stationed at the edge of the voided zone. Even from our dangerously close position, instrument fluctuations were extremely subtle. During the tests that followed all types of material were injected into the area, with results observed, recorded, and analyzed by our completely computerized laboratory. The findings confirmed a theory, suggested before our ship's departure. The center of the universe was also its origin. The destructive area was where the original cosmic explosion had formed the first swirling globes of heat and light, which in turn exploded into a myriad of stars and planets. Although the explosion had ceased, the force was still there. Any material introduced into the "destruct-area" was instantly dissimulated and distributed to the ends of the universe. No reasonable explanation of the force could be found, but now we know that it existed, and where. It was particularly interesting to note that in its final analysis, the mechanical voice of our computer-complex proclaimed the area to be creative, and not destructive. In fact, it referred often to creation and even to a creator. However, when questioned on the origin and final purpose of this creator, the computer could only reply, "Data: Insufficient."

The trip back was purely routine. So that I had time to reflect on my bizarre experience. It was too real to be dismissed as an hallucination. I recalled a former incident which I believe was directly related to this more recent departure. When I was nineteen, I lost a week. I'd disappeared from my college dorm, and missed an important athletic event. Afterwards, I was just as mysteriously returned with no recollection of where I'd been. My all-over tanned and exhausted condition suggested to my classmates that I'd been on one whale of an excursion. Apparently time, or time displacement, meant nothing to the force within the heart of the voided area. I am convinced that somewhere near the core of creation exists a portal to another, and better world. An entrance to a dimension that we can never reach in our portable towers of babel. The preview that I was privileged to enjoy was perhaps part of an enterprise to preserve the highly favored human species. The females, I'm sure were part of that other world. My fellow males, I now recall from a former interest in sports. The powerful negro, "Jo'h" was a youthful Joe Louis. The clean-limbed Indian, "Je'm," was no other than Jim Thorpe. Both superb athletes, who must have done their own, temporary disappearing-acts sometime in their late teens. I'd been in good company. The re-play that I experienced could have been caused by my proximity to the portal, or for a more deliberate reason. In an age of super-science, men have forgotten their vague beginning. Science cannot explain all things. I doubt that my personal passage through the portal of paradise will ever be proven. At least not from this side of eternity. But the mysterious force within the center of the voided zone will testify, finally and forever, to the existence of a power beyond the concept of man. A supreme being, dwelling in the heart of the universe, as well as in the heart of mankind. Or as another member of our ship's company logically observed, "Existance confirmed; HE lives."

by BILL CANTEY

FILLING THE GAPS

GORDON MATTHEWS

Dear 3G,

As time progresses it becomes more and more evident that something drastic is going to have to happen on the written end of fandom. Outside of BPP (Blue Plague Publications) standards of fannish writing keep sinking, and the main weight is left on the shoulders of a very few fan writers: primarily, Dwight Decker, Tony Isabella, Duffy Vohland and myself. Poor Tony has been so dragged down by requests that his column in the last FF was reduced to a mere run-down of comics people he likes. I don't know anything about Duffy, but I know that Dwight Decker has quit trying to carry written fandom on his shoulders. Or, as he would like to put it, *Atlas has shrugged*. And I am also tired of writing so many articles that my inspiration has nearly run dry in that area. As I said before, I don't know about Duffy, but Tony's columns will probably get no better if he keeps writing so much, especially now that he is struggling to go pro, and you can't expect too much work from either Dwight or me anymore. Therefore, I will try with this article to help fill in the empty space.

First of all, the editor is very much at fault. The trouble with you, 3G, and so many faneds like you, is that you're obsessed by art and pros. You will go to fantastic lengths to get ahold of art by John Fantucchio and Robert Kline and will grovel until you get curvature of the spine to get anything at all from a pro-- and these things in themselves are not necessarily too bad -- but you seem to expend practically no effort in getting ahold of good writers. Because you've spent all your time getting interviews, and prestige artists, you don't even know where the good writers are! Really, 3G, you ought to get around more. There would have been no reason to run something like "Conan of Marvel" if you had known about the excellent review of the series Jon Yost ran in the apa GALAXY. An incredible wealth of material is run in apas, and an energetic editor could either get some of the apa-members to write for his fanzine or reprint their material from the apas (with the writer's permission). In GALAXY Michael Carlson, Mike Oliver, Will Straw, and Jon Yost are all fine writers who are not particularly well-known in fandom major. In CAPA-Alpha, there is always very worthwhile material being published, by people like Bill Blackbeard and Fred Patten, and while they probably wouldn't write new stuff for your fanzine, they might let you reprint some of the stuff they run in K-A.

I mentioned BPP at the beginning of this article; this is a small corner of fandom which contains the very finest new creative powers to evolve in fandom. Mark Proskey, Ed Romero, Rob Rucker, Carl Gafford, Jeff Anderson, and Sheldon Weibe all show a young brilliance that puts the rest of fandom to shame.

And you have no one but yourself to blame for not running across these talented people before. They might not have the egoboo power of a Robert Kline, but they put meat on the bones of your, frankly, undernourished fanzine.

Another thing that is the editor's fault; no imagination. Anti-imagination, in fact. Quite frankly, 3G, most of these people from BPP wouldn't be interested in working for FANTASTIC FANZINE. Your scope of vision is too narrow, and theirs is unlimited. You're trying to "play it safe" too much, putting out a traditional type of fanzine which clashes very harshly indeed with revolutionary ideas. The danger of this type of editorial policy is that those writers most eager to write in the traditional style do so because they lack the imagination to do otherwise and you therefore will attract a lower order of writer. The writers with imagination will be off doing something else.

The solution to this is to simply clear up your editorial constipation. Adopt an "anything goes" policy, and judge material on a basis of quality, not subject matter and style. Don't worry about losing readers because of this. FF has a big enough hype that it would sell if all the pages were blank.

And now my advice for anybody who wants to write for fanzines, but needs a bit of polishing.

The first thing I want to impress on you is that you must feel your writing. Never force yourself to write anything, and never write anything that you don't want to. If a piece of written work is forced, it shows it. And never limit yourself. Don't let yourself be bound by conventional styles. Forget all the shit that you read in other fanzines -- that's nothing to emulate. Don't worry about what the editor wants. He needs you more than you need him. In fandom, you can always find *somebody* to publish what you write. Once a faned asked me for an article on DETECTIVE stories and I sent him a one-act play. He hasn't sent it back, so I guess he's going to use it. But whether he does or not, it's better to write a good one-act play than to write a poor or mediocre article all the way around; better for you, better for the faned, and better for the readers, whether he uses it or not.

Don't make fan writing an ego trip. Don't send contributions to large circulation 'zines to see your name in print before 500 or so readers. In fact, it's best not to send an unsolicited manuscript to a big 'zine unless you feel it's important enough that as many people as possible should read for their own benefit. The editors of the big 'zines are capable of handling their own problems and are in a position to draw in the top fan writers if they have the ambition. It's far better to send manuscripts to faneds who work hard but need help anyway.

About the only way I can advise you that might help your writing is in a rather negative way. Analyze material that is faulty and see what's wrong with it; then avoid those faults. Never ape any other writer; always try to be original. Avoid cliches. Also avoid using too many adjectives, as this clutters up your work badly. (This was one of my earlier problems.) Always re-read your manuscript and edit it mercilessly. You should, in your editing, eliminate more than you add. Be economical about your writing; get rid of anything that isn't useful. Don't worry about being cute and clever. If that's you, it'll fit in without any trouble, and if it's not, then forget it.

And always remember that your main objective is to entertain. So, perhaps now we can fill in the gaps? If any faneds or hopeful fan writers would like to ask me anything in this area that I haven't already covered, I can be reached at 8 Perry Street, Union City, Pa. 16438.

Best Wishes,
Gordon Matthews

[EDITOR'S NOTE: I have never refused to print a well-written and well thought-out opinion article by any fan. However, when the thoughts and ideas expressed in such an article differ from my own to a great extent, I would like to make my own opinions known to the readers.

I was originally going to write a short note at the end of Gordon's article, expressing my own views on what Gordon discussed. But, after writing my comments on Gordon's article, I found it ran over a full page of typing. I don't have the space to devote another page to this article, so rather than to skim over what Gordon said, I'll just suffice it to say the opinions contained in "Filling The Gaps" are not mine, and in some cases, directly the opposite from mine. I think Gordon has written a very thought-provoking article here, and it deserves the FF readers' careful thought. Please send your comments on "Filling The Gaps" to FF - 3G (?)]

THE ANDERSON INCIDENT

WRITTEN BY JIM WILSON

It was 7:14 P.M.; the sun had set and the rapidly-fading light-motes that remained seemed to be buffeted about by the cool wind that blew through the town. It was a summery weekend evening, and there was the sound of children at play. There was an aura of quiet in the town; not the dead-heat quiet that descends on all too many small towns during too many summer days, but a serene quiet. The people in the town felt it. They forgot all the great mind-staggering problems of their planet and began a relaxed evening of television watching or reading, or what ever else is done at such times.

All, that is, save one.

David Anderson sat in his room, glaring at the report on his desk-table and fuming. He snatched the paper from the desk again and reread it, as if to find a loophole somewhere. There were none. It was neatly typed on his school's stationary, and was signed by the principal himself. As he poured over it again, he suddenly got an illogical urge to rip the paper to shreds, even though it would do no good, except to help burn out his rage. He began to tear it, but froze as he heard voices coming from the living room. He crept surreptitiously to the door, in order to catch every detail.

'Who are we to say what's best? After all, the school people are experts in this type of thing."

Anderson frowned, tension mounting as he realized the ramifications of what he had just heard his mother say. He stared hard at his mini-typewriter and the fanzines that covered the desktop, not really seeing them.

"Yes, I think you're right. They wouldn't have recommended this if they didn't think it was right. And it's our duty to do what's best."

How the Goddamn hell would you know? he thought, mentally raging. *You're no telepath! No, not what's best; you only want me out of here.*

David Anderson was not exactly a typical fan, though the circumstances that led him into the fannish microcosm were typical enough. He had always loved to read comics, and had had a letter printed in a Marvel lettercol, which inspired the president of a Marvel fan club of that era to invite him to join. He eagerly did so, and subsequently discovered the rest of fandom

Meanwhile, he went about his life in school as per usual. He was an anomaly at his school, brilliant. He got and maintained a flat average of 97 without half trying, and often wondered what he could do if he really applied himself to his schoolwork. Not caring to be so mundane, he did not; unfortunately for him his peers thought otherwise and determined to steer clear of him until he came down and stopped acting so snobbish. Snobbery? The thought never crossed Anderson's mind. But, faced with growing resentment and hostility from his classmates, his emotions forced him into retaliation. In this case, he decided to hell with all of them and turned completely to fandom for an outlet for his talent and emotion. He wrote, and polished his style, and wrote more, and more, and kept improving until he was one of the most sought-after writers in fandom. In the meantime, he picked up a couple of friends in the forms of two teachers at his school, who became his only confidants -- the only people he trusted. His parents neither understood him nor cared, except on an extremely superficial level. He accepted this, and continued as he had been. He landed a job as staff writer for FANTAGRAPHICS in Virginia, and then was satisfied. So what if he *didn't* have any sort of meaningful relationships outside of his own skin, with the exceptions of Dorothy Johnson and Janice Davidson, the two teachers? He had fandom and his talent; something no one could arbitrarily deprive him of.

Then there was the SRA intelligence test; and then the results, and the letter to his parents -- the letter that had opened the gates of hell. It had been sealed in an envelope, and meant for the eyes of his parents only, but the administration had not reckoned with David Anderson's seeming ability to do almost anything. He walked into the school's chemistry laboratory, picked three reagents, mixed them, filtered the supernatant out of the precipitate that formed, and brushed the liquid onto the envelope. It soaked right through the paper and instantly dissolved the glue that held the envelope closed. Three seconds later, the solution (which was mostly alcohol) evaporated, leaving not a trace. He pulled out the letter, had it xeroxed, replaced the original in its envelope and resealed it, and gave it to his parents.

The letter suprised him. It stated that his IQ was well over 160, even when measured on the most comprehensive scale existing; that he had completely mastered on his own most every subject the school could offer at the age of fourteen; and that he belonged in a special boarding school on the West Coast, which could offer him a challenge.

And that's the problem, he said resentfully to himself. *I've heard about those places -- they make those English horror chambers misnamed "schools" seem like amusement parks. And if I go there, I'll be over 500 miles from the only two people who care. And what about fandom? Those people at that dump might load me down with useless homework. But wait -- it'll be getting me out of this whistle-stop -- and as for homework, suppose I just refuse? Why not go? I'll take care of the problems as I come to them*

A crafty, ultra-confident smile curved his lips, as he waited for his parents to come and tell him that he would be attending a special school starting immediately.

II

In Springfield, Virginia, Jim Wilson walked into his office at the FF Control complex whistling. All of a sudden, things had been going his way. Wilson, FANTAGRAPHICS' executive story consultant in charge of science fiction, was also director and head writer of several of FF Control's graphic story magazine projects. His most pressing problem had been getting the first of a series out -- the book was finally in production, and he could again concentrate on his forte -- story, script, and rewrite. And Gary had rounded up a writer for the department who seemed to be an utter genuis. He had read David Anderson's first script for one of the new books, and was stunned. Anderson had produced a story to rival Harlan Ellison himself. Wilson had thought that Anderson's script, like other first drafts (including his own) he had gotten into shape for publication, would require extensive rewrites, but even after three readings, he could find absolutely nothing wrong with it. Groth and Scholz had had the same reactions. And now, Anderson was developing another original script for the series and plotting a third! Wilson was still grinning as he sat down at his desk and buried himself in the plot-line of his most recent script.

At that moment, the elevator doors whirred open and Gary Groth stepped out, into the office. "Jim, mix me one of those mint juleps of yours. I feel like celebrating."

"AHA!" Wilson exclaimed. "You're in a good mood, and you've caught up on everything, or you wouldn't be here. Let me guess the reason: Anderson?"

"Correct-o," Groth said. "Do you know that over half of the text in the next FF is his work? That guy can turn out more quality material at a super speed than anyone I've ever had on the staff."

"Yeah, that's true," Wilson said. "Me, I can write something like 'Cry Of Silence,' but it takes months of research work and backgrounds before I can even start! And then, it usually takes me a

month to write the script itself. But Anderson comes along and writes a love story more poetic than anything Sturgeon ever did inside of ten days."

"Hah! Do you know I've wanted a good article on the Warren Publications for months, but every writer I contact about it gives me the same old line: Warren is a showcase for new artists and writers; then they attempt to analyze James Warren, the person, from his public appearances at conventions, without even meeting him, much less talking to him. One writer even wrote a 22 page manuscript, which turned out to be a vehicle to slander Jim Warren, hardly mentioning his publications, and the men behind them. So I tell Anderson. Seven days later there is a typed manuscript on my desk, titled, 'The Warren Story,' by guess-who. Anderson talked with Warren, and several members of his staff, and wrote an interesting and informative article on the three Warren Publications, and the men that made them."

"Yeah. Gary, don't ever let him into the building."

"Why?"

"Because he's liable to replace me as the story consultant here," Wilson said, dead pan.

"It could be worse," Groth said. "He could get *my* job!" They both started laughing.

David Anderson was walking down a sidewalk, suitcase in hand, toward his new pseudo-home, the McEveety School. He was in a singularly good mood, considering the circumstances; why had he been so dead-set against this? Nothing had been lost except his two friends, and he could write them and see them on weekends and holidays, perhaps. And fandom was no problem; he'd sent in COA's to GRAPHIC STORY WORLD and COMIXSCENE, which took care of things rather nicely. *Besides,* he thought, *nothing bad could happen today.* He looked around again. It was clear, warm, and sunny, and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. The school was just up ahead; a huge structure, two stories, with dormitories on either side of the main building. Something indefinable struck him as odd about the buildings, but nothing he could put his finger on. He finally reached the main building, and started up the cement steps. Even they seemed to yield under his feet as he ascended, in a rhythmical pace. He opened the door and stepped through

III

Anderson was startled by what he heard as he walked in. He had anticipated a bustling akin to that in his old school and others he had visited, but this was unexpected.

Dead silence.

It was not the silence of an open meadow in summer, or that of a library. It was a pall; an overcast; almost a physical presence. It was a tense silence -- almost as if some great cosmic god would obliterate anyone who dared to break it.

This momentarily flashed through David Anderson's mind as he stood in the entrance foyer, and he quickly dismissed it as naught but a product of his oftimes overactive imagination. Looking around, he quickly spotted a corridor at the far end of the foyer. He walked toward it.

Going down the corridor, he soon discovered the door to the main office. He opened the door, and was greeted finally by a sound; that of an electric typewriter in operation. A secretary looked up at him. He introduced himself, and was taken in to meet the headmaster and get his schedule worked out.

That done, he was shown to a dormitory, and to the cafeteria, and to the classes he would be attending. Then, he was left along, to look around; for he would not have to begin classes until the next day.

He stood in an empty corridor; there was absolutely no one else in it. The doors to the classrooms were all closed, and all the doors were made of heavy wood with no windows. He walked on down the corridor, and paused for a drink of water at a cooler. At that moment, a boy about Anderson's age entered from a nearby door carrying a stack of books. Anderson glanced at him momentarily. The boy stared at him. "I haven't seen you before," the boy said. "Are you trying to get in here?"

Anderson smiled wryly. "It would seem so," he said.

The boy grabbed his arm. "Look man, if you never take any other advice in your life, take this: Get out of here. Leave, before it's too late." He looked around nervously. "I have to go."

Anderson followed the boy with his eyes. Now what was *that* all about? Puzzled, he walked back to the dormitory. He had to finish the treatment for Wilson anyway; this was as good a time as any.

When he arrived, there was no one in the room. That suited Anderson fine, as he preferred to work alone. He opened his suitcase and removed his typewriter. Luckily, it was one of the new compact jobs; hardly bigger than an encyclopedia volume. He went over the plot and style of the story as he inserted a piece of paper into the machine. He had been experimenting quite a bit recently, and this story outline was one result of his experimentation -- using the lyrics (and variations thereof) of a song to narrate the story. It had been an inspiration borne out of Heinlein's classic, "The Green Hills of Earth," and right then he was just playing with it. He scribbled down a verse by hand.

"There are times when I feel lonely,
There are times when I feel blue,
But when I see the morning sun rise,
That's when I always think of you."

Not bad, Anderson thought. Of course it was hokey, but it fit the mood of the story. He pressed the shift of his typewriter several times and adjusted the ribbon position, and was ready to begin - except for correction tape. He dug into his suitcase to find some, and in so doing, noticed the mimeographed pages that had been placed on his bed. Curiously, he stopped to read them. The entire list was four pages long. "STUDENT REGULATIONS," it read.

Forty seconds later, he had plowed through all four pages. He stared blindly at the list, not really paying attention to what was on it again; he was perspiring. *OmyGod,* he thought, as phrases from the list whirled around in his mind. His eyes focused on the list again. "All students must wear only authorized clothing ...all students are to be in bed by 9.00 P.M.; dormitory doors will be locked at this time...no talking is permitted during study periods...All teachers are responsible for their students. This includes discipline problems...corporal punishment may be used at the discretion of the teacher..."

With a sinking sensation, Anderson realized just what he had gotten himself into: An inflexible academy which seemed to be soley concerned with maintaining a status-quo, not with upgrading quality. The rule list proved that it was also authoritarian and that avant-garde ideas would probably be dealt with by suppression. He mopped his face with his handkerchief (idly wondering whether or not it would be considered "authorized clothing") and decided to find out more.

In FF Control, Wilson's intercom buzzed just as he was in the middle of a complex storyline. Annoyed, he ignored the buzz; this was more important. Eventually the sound stopped, and Wilson, in heat over the story he was involved with, whirled in his deskchair, switched on his IBM, and began hammering out the next scene in the script. As he paused to compose a piece of the dialogue, the desk panel began buzzing again. Inhaling deeply, he switched off the typewriter and hit the transmit key. "Wilson here."

"Jim? Gary here. Something's come up."

"Well, what is it?"

"I'd rather not put it on the speaker. Can you come up here?"

"On my way."

Wilson walked into Groth's office. Sitting at his desk, Groth was intently studying several handwritten sheets of

paper. He looked up as Wilson sat down before the desk and idly looked it over. "You look worried," Wilson said. "What's going on?"

"Anderson," Groth said. "He's having to attend a special school out west. Hell's broke loose. Read this."

Wilson took the papers Groth had been looking at. It was a letter from Anderson. He began reading. "The school is like something out of 'The Prisoner,'" it read. "The students walk like zombies — sleepwalkers. The mood of oppression and fear is so thick and heavy that you could almost reach out and touch it. And there can be no escape, except into brief fantasies. There is no change in the routines, absolutely none. The students do not leave the school, for there is no reason for them to. Basic needs -- food, shelter, medical attention -- are provided. This school is a completely autonomous complex.

"No attention is paid to creativity or anything like it; there aren't even any classes in art. Every class consists of little more than memorizing a force-fed bunch of facts. And, of course, there is authority. Above all, authority. We are all supposed to respect authority, above all else, to accept whatever brutality is handed us, and to never, *never* complain. Those who *do* complain are quickly dispatched through the use of sadistic means which pain me even to think of. Suffice it to say that the teachers here seem to admire the old-guard English and Irish teachers so much that they copy their administrative methods.

"I have drawn on all my experience and ability to hold out so far, but the long day will soon be over and the sun will have to set. I sense this without knowing why. What feeble candle of comprehension informs me? I know not. All my other faculties are flickering out, one by one; it is all I can do to shield myself and yet stay unsuspected. Soon, however, I will be truly dispossessed and I shall be as one with the others here. And so it will remain for years, until I am gone. Gone in more ways than one; my talent shall be atrophied by nonuse. What use then the empty shell? You at FF Control have an espionage network that SHIELD would be proud of. Contact me and help me in this. My best, David Anderson."

Wilson looked up. "He's off his gourd," he whispered. "Nothing could be like that... *couldn't be...*" He let it trail off.

"Couldn't it?" Groth said. It was not a question.

"All right. Suppose it were. What could we do to change it? Sure, we've won victories over impossible odds before -- we've launched offensives and counter-attacks -- but only within our own sub-culture. We could no more change the McEveety School than we could change Heebie or Van Hives."

"I'm calling a meeting of the executive staff in two hours," Groth said. "We can't lose Anderson now; he's the best thing that's happened to fandom since the invention of the offset press. We'll solve this some way."

IV

David Anderson sat in class, ostensibly paying attention to the droning voice of the teacher, but his mind was actually on more important matters. Work on the story was going slowly, very slowly, but it stabalized things; kept him from letting the sterility of life at McEveety get to him -- for a while. But today, even thoughts of the treatment were supplanted by what had happened. FF Control had contacted him. Gary Groth and his staff had worked out a plan to get him out of the McEveety School, and more, literally clean house there. Groth himself and one of his associates were supposed to show up just after classes, and initiate Phase One. What was that that was being said..?

"Yes, you, David," said the teacher. She bore a distinctive resemblance to Susan Saint James, but her personality was not unlike that of a tax auditor or a military dictator. She stared down at Anderson. "You will please tell me the social and economic factors that led to the outbreak of the Second Punic War."

God, Anderson thought, licking his lips. *I wasn't listening at all to that ...I'll have to recall them from memory.*

But his mind was a blank.

"You were not paying attention," she said flatly.

"I was..." Anderson started to say.

"Don't contradict. You will please stay here after class is over." Briskly, she resumed her lecture on the Punic Wars, and the now familiar sinking feeling hit Anderson like a stomach punch from a heavyweight. *Well, I won't have to go through this much longer,* he thought.

Later that afternoon, Groth and Wilson walked toward Anderson's dormitory. "Man, he wasn't kidding," Groth said in a low voice. "Have you noticed all the kids in this place? They look almost... robotized. Man, the sooner we get out of here, the better."

"Yeah," Wilson replied. "John Holt should see this."

"Let's see," Groth said. "This room should be it." Wilson opened the door, and they stepped inside.

They were met by a throttled sob, then a series of cracking noises, which seemed to come from a room adjoining the dorm and connected to it by a door. On hearing the noise, Groth and Wilson ducked back outside into the corridor. "What the devil..." Wilson whispered. The noise continued for some time. Finally, it ceased, and the history teacher stepped out, not noticing Groth and Wilson behind her, and swiftly walked away. The two from FF Control stood watching her exit. "How about that," Wilson said, ogling.

"Yeahhhh," Groth added. "With those legs, why does she need that cane?"

Then, their minds back on business, they again walked into the dorm. The door to the other room was partially open, and they heard a string of colored adjectives being muttered. A few seconds later, Anderson stormed out into the dorm, face a livid red, and his eyes were bright with sheer hatred. He stopped in mid-step on seeing Groth and Wilson, and he managed a very weak smile. "Gary... Jim. I'm glad you made it."

In a half-hour, they laid out the Plan to him. David Anderson was to record on film any untoward activities and the general level of morale in the school, and turn it back in to FF Control to be processed. The resulting evidence would then be shown to newspaper editors, television news reporters, juvenile authorities, and other such parties. If the cards were played right, those responsible for the atrocities committed at McEveety would, on exposure, find themselves dismissed.

"Yeah," Anderson frowned bitterly. "I can just imagine what happens when I go around photographing everything that goes on around here."

"Don't worry," Wilson said. "We've taken care of that, too. But David... why don't you just tell your parents the things that go on here? They could get you out of here with no trouble at all -- and then you could tell these bums all where to go."

Suddenly, all the bitterness and hatred was forced to the surface. "My parents?" Anderson said hysterically. *My* parents? You fool, don't you think that if they had any intention of getting me out, they would have paid attention to the things I said about the place in my letters?" His voice fell, and suddenly it was nothing more than the voice of a fourteen year old boy. "I've written... at first, there were postcard answers... now, I may or may not hear from them in any given week... but I know they have no desire to get me out of here..."

Wilson frowned, looked at the floor, and put a hand on Anderson's shoulder. "Yeah. Well, we don't need them, David. We'll get you out of here. And this will do it." Wilson withdrew a box from his pocket. From it he took a gleaming metal rectangle roughly the size and shape of a pack of cigarettes. "This is an ingenious little device worked up by Adcor Electronics, one of FF Control's smaller subsidiaries. It's a miniaturized motion picture camera and sound recorder, good for two hours' steady recording. Just press the stud on the side when you want to get something. It operates on an atomic battery, and photographs on normal room lighting."

Anderson took the camera. He felt some of the old enthusiasm coming back; a good feeling. Why shouldn't it work? For the first time in weeks, Anderson smiled openly.

"We'll send someone by to pick up the camera in two weeks," said Groth.

"Make it one week," said Anderson. "That's plenty of time around here. Besides, I want out of here like fast!"

Groth and Wilson grinned and walked out.

V

The chemistry laboratory was as dark and gloomy as the rest of the building. Fluorescent tubes cast a flat bluish light over the chemical-scarred workbenches. A number of students were working at the benches, mechanically performing experiments out of lab manuals in front of them. One boy of about twelve held a beaker of hydrochloric acid over a thistle tube which had been inserted into a flask holding bits of zinc, and heated by a Bunsen burner. He set the beaker down to adjust the flame, then began pouring the acid into the flask. For a moment, there was only a strong bubbling reaction as the acid hit the zinc. Then there was a louder sizzling sound, finally a sharp crack as the boiling flask exploded, sending the boiling hot acid mixture onto the boy. He screamed in pain and fell to the floor, the acid burning through his cheap lab apron and charring his clothing. He tried to rip off his shirt, but only succeeded in getting the acid on his hands. He was whimpering. In a moment, the teacher was over him with a solution of sodium bicarbonate, which she splashed over him where the acid had touched him. Methodically, she removed what was left of his apron and shirt, revealing his chest, which was almost completely covered with ugly, reddish blisters. She called the school nurse.

The next day, the boy was sitting in class again; his hands were both bandaged; there was one on his neck; other bandaging was covered by his clothing. The teacher called him, and he got up and stood before her, in front of the room.

"You were very careless yesterday, Kevin," she said coldly.

Kevin hung his head, knowing what was coming. "Yes ma'am."

Her voice rose a controlled notch. "You knew better than to mix and react hydrochloric acid with zinc in a closed container, especially at that temperature didn't you?"

"I..."

"Don't you have enough sense to know that the pressure of the released hydrogen would build up until it exploded the flask?"

There were tears in his eyes, now. "I... guess... I forgot."

She drew her hand back and slapped him, almost sending him reeling. The blow left an angry red and white pattern across his cheek. "That's so you won't 'forget' again," she said. "Be seated."

Kevin, face flooded with tears, went back to his seat.

The screen was blank...

The audience was silent...

Jim Wilson felt somewhat queasy as Gary Groth deactivated the projector and snapped the room lights back on. As for Groth himself, Wilson thought he looked a bit pale, but that could be only Wilson's eyes, readjusting to the bright overhead lighting. "That was just one example," Groth said to the assembled reporters. "We have lots more where that came from."

"It's horrible," said one reporter. "But, for openers, that state has no rules or laws prohibiting corporal punishment in schools."

"So?" Wilson snapped vehemently.

"Good Lord, that's sheer brutality! And what about the rest? That place is a chamber of horrors -- I know, I've seen it myself! We can't just stand by and watch those gifted children turned into automatons!"

"But your evidence is completely subjective," said a second reporter. "Except for the final scene, which some could claim was warranted..." -- Wilson snorted -- "...the only things in that film that people would notice were that the teacher reacted quickly, and that he got immediate medical attention."

"Of course," Groth said. "Even in the Middle Ages, *slaves* were well cared for."

"As long as parents don't object to the treatment of their children, and as long as the school continues to maintain the required curriculum level, nothing can be done," said the first reporter.

"And that's it, eh?" Wilson asked/said. "We just sit back and watch such atrocities be committed?"

We could all do write-ups," said the second reporter. "And just maybe we could have it investigated in two or three years by hollering until someone decided to listen or by petitioning Congress. But things would stay the same until then."

Groth sighed, and Wilson looked disgusted.

Wilson walked the length of the dormitory corridor for the second time, wishing all the while that Groth had come along. He stopped at the door and opened it to face Anderson.

Oh no, Wilson thought, as he looked at Anderson, whose face was literally aglow with hope. There was a wide grin on his face. He spoke. "Hiya, Jim! Tell me -- how long before the Congressional inquiry goes into effect? How long before the Supreme Court declares this place unconstitutional? Better still, how long before you can get me outta here?"

"Dave..." Wilson began, and stopped.

Anderson looked curious.

"Hell," Wilson said. "Oh *hell*. It's no use. I don't have the courage to tell you."

Anderson's grin gave way to a disconsolate smile. "Tell me what, Jim?"

"That nothing can be done," Wilson said sourly. "That as long as this place maintains the supposed curriculum it has now, things are gonna stay the same damned way probably for the next ten millenia."

Anderson felt more than a sinking sensation then. It was as though someone had reached into his gut and twisted his stomach around. He sat down on his bed, speechless.

"I'm sorry, Dave," Wilson said, hating himself because of the banality of the words. Then, angry, he sat down beside Anderson, and grabbed his arm. "Look," Wilson said. "You've said that your parents don't give a damn. Alright then, turnabout is fair play. You fink out on them for a change. Get out of here. Fast. Sneak out the back door or something. Then run like hell."

Anderson smiled weakly, his face a mask. Wilson squeezed his arm, and got up and left.

VI

Afterward, Anderson's life was bizarre, grotesque. He went to classes, did assignments, ate, slept, all with clockwork precision; but he was never really a part of it. It was as though there were a loud buzzing in his ears, a film

over his eyes, so that he had to consciously concentrate on everything that went on around him or he would lose it. On top of all of it was the sickness; the feeling of despair, emptiness, hanging heavy within him.

The days came and went. One after another, all alike, a string of meaningless scores in grade books, of other children humiliated and struck, of tasteless meals, of overcast, grey days.

One day, the deadness did not lift, but it didn't bother him so much; he had grown accustomed to the routines. Through the day, into the dorm with the others, silent, blank. Then, the realization a sick feeling, he began to understand what was happening to him -- that he was giving in to the mold, that his life was becoming death. In terror, he sought refuge in "A Long Trip To Yesterday," the story outline he was doing for Fantagraphics. Reading through what he had done, he thought of long ago, when he had once visited FF Control, and seen the fun and excitement shared by the others -- Groth andWilsonandStewartandDeckerandPaskoand--and--

All gone. Even writing and the thrill of knowing his stories would be read and studied and discussed and developed into finished, illustrated magazines no longer excited him. But still, the writing had to go on; without it, he would go under for sure. Immersing himself in it, the scene wrote itself after he'd revised the lyric-narration.

"Soft summer breezes will be ending.
Those cold winter winds are coming soon
When I look back at all those good times,
That's when I always think of you."

"When I look back," he whispered, trying it. But he couldn't concentrate. "Always... think of..." Wilson walking out. His footsteps echoing down the corridor. If only he had the courage to do what Wilson suggested! *But I couldn't,* Anderson thought, resenting himself. *Besides, even if I did leave, where would I go?"*

Then he froze. *Them!* he thought, hope surging up. *Dorothy and Janice! They will understand!*

He had a little money saved for just such an occasion. And there was a public telephone just outside the main building on a street corner. He frantically gathered up all his money -- $7.10 in all -- surely enough for one or two long distance calls. He smiled -- maybe all wasn't lost!

In FF Control, Gary Groth had been trying to get back into his normal routine, unable to think of any way to help Anderson. He was going over articles that had been submitted for FF. He scanned through one, and hit on the word "collection." There was something about that word that had nothing to do with comics.

COLLECTION!

He rammed the intercom key.

Meanwhile, Wilson had been brainwashing himself with the storyline of the script he'd been working on. He was totally involved in it. He smiled, switched on his typewriter, and began where he'd left off the last time. He typed half a page and

BZZZZZZZZZ!

Wilson stopped typing. It was as though someone had dumped him out of a warm bed into a tub of ice water. Twice in a row! He gritted his teeth and hit the transmit button. "Wilson here."

"Jim? Gary. Hey, man, I have it."

"What?"

"How we can get David Anderson out of that hell-hole! Get up here right away!"

'Right!"

Anderson held the receiver anxiously. The phone on the other end rang. He welcomed the familiar sound of the ring, but why in the devil was it taking so long? Surely she's home...

He was persistent. Finally, after several lifetimes, there was a click and a margerine-warm voice said, "Yes?"

Did he detect a note of exasperation in her voice? Surely not. "Hi," he said, not even attempting to force a bantering tone into his voice.

"Oh, hi, David," Janice Davidson said.

Hope again -- but this

Did he detect a note of exasperation in her voice? Surely not. "Hi," he said, not even attempting to force a bantering tone into his voice.

"Oh, hi, David," Janice Davidson said.

Hope again -- but this time it froze. Yeah, there *was* something wrong somewhere. He could feel it. "I... I called to tell you... to ask you... did you get my last letter?"

"Yes," said Janice. "It's really horrible that anyone would have to live and study under those conditions. Especially someone with your intelligence and sensitivity. But I'm glad you called. David, there's something I have to tell you today."

Anderson frowned, the sickness coming on stronger. "W-what is it?"

An awkward pause. "David, but I simply can't take the time to talk with you, or write, without sacrificing the time I spend on schoolwork, and I don't want to do that."

Anderson plunged further down. He heard himself say, "Oh. I... suppose you want me to stop calling... and writing."

"Yes."

"But... but..."

"I don't have time to sit and argue with you," Janice insisted. "I'll still be willing to be friends, but I simply can't afford to get seriously involved."

"Uh..." Anderson said, not trusting himself to make a lucid reply.

"Okay," Gary Groth said. "Here's what we do. We send some of our boys to investigate other private schools with similar curriculum setups, only without the totalitarian nature of McEveety. Then, we go around and get donations from all of the staff in order to pay his tuition to one of them..."

"Hah!" Wilson said. "Remember our last donation drive?"

"Okay, so we'll supplement what we do get with the money in our Pro Artist Fund. I guess it won't hurt us to do without a few pages of Neal Adams art. Anyway, when we get the money, we then call the headmaster at McEveety, and get Anderson out."

"It's a good idea. But we'd better hurry. Anderson's just a kid, and pretty shaken up; he might do something drastic, hurt himself... better make an announcement to the staff."

Anderson hung up the phone numbly. *Well, it's over,* he thought. *What a fool I was, trusting her to help me when I needed it, not knowing that one Janice Davidson was nothing but a hedonistic fink whose total involvement was only a superficial friendship that she obliterated as soon as she saw I might need her help. Lucky I found out, I guess. Well, if she doesn't want anything to do with me from here on in, fine. I was always closer to Dorothy anyway.*

But it was several very long minutes before he could stop crying and give the operator Dorothy Johnson's number.

Finally, he swallowed and was able to talk without sobbing. The connection was made, and after several rings, Dorothy picked up her phone. "Dorothy?" David greeted hesitatingly, and was startled at the reaction he got:

"David, I don't know what it is you want, but I don't have time to talk to you right now; I have an appointment I must keep."

"But... th-this is important... I need to *talk* to someone."

"I'm sorry, but I can't, not right now. Can you afford to call me back tomorrow?"

"But... but, I have to talk to you, I'll go insane unless you can help me..'

"Look, David, I know this seems important to you now, but there's an appointment I can't be late for."

"Dorothy, for the love of God, *please!* Listen... I feel sick, my stomach, my hands are shaking, I feel panicky -- I..."

"David... see the nurse there. But I have to go -- now."

"THEN GO AHEAD!" Anderson screamed into the receiver before flinging it back on the hook.

He shivered uncontrollably. He had been wrong; the loneliness he'd felt before was nothing compared to this. Violent emotional shocks ripped at him relentlessly.

The thought occured to him then: *There's no one I can count on besides my self.*

He tried to assess his situation, knowing at the same time that it was a futile gesture to try to continue at McEveety.

But he decided to try, anyway. He stepped out of the phone booth and walked back toward the dormitory... it was cold...

VII

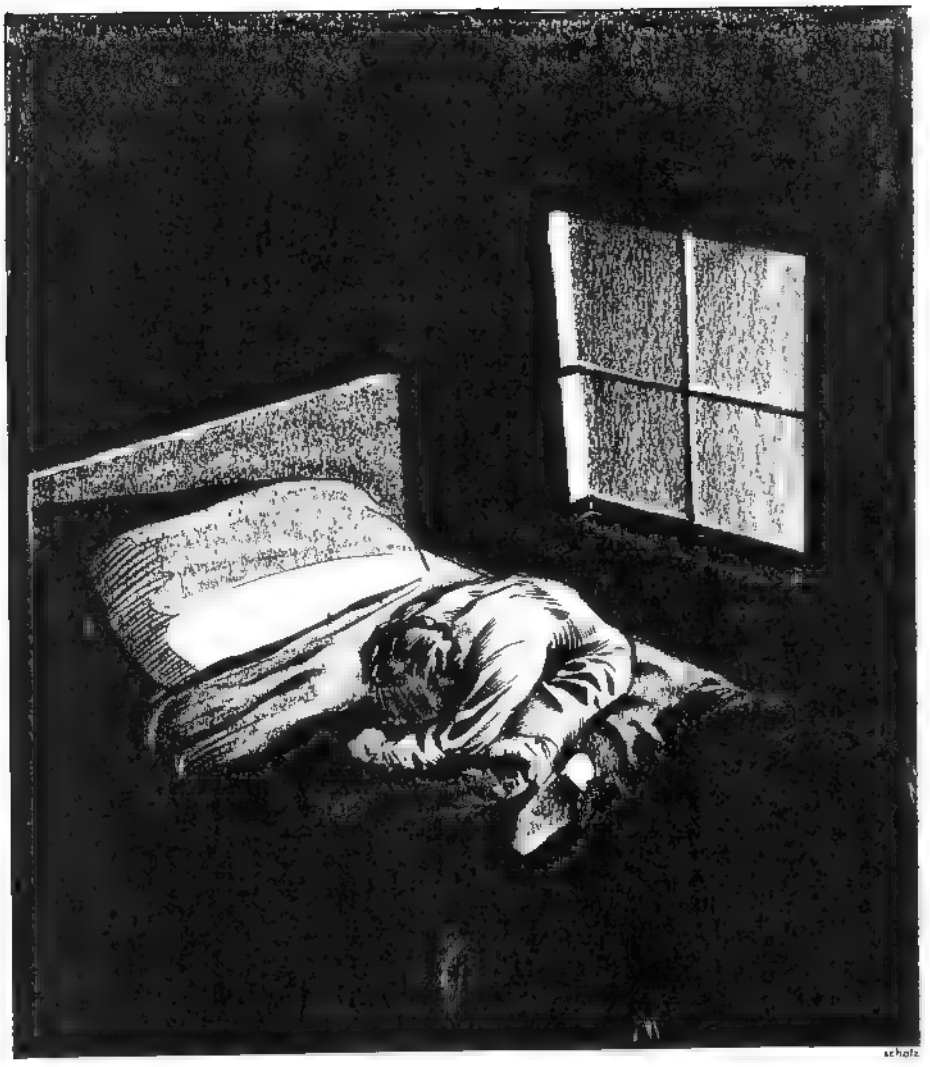
Something was different in the dormitory. There were the same expressionless boys he had seen while he'd been there, but now there were new additions. Three new boys had moved in while he'd been out. Anderson made a sardonic sound, a grotesque mockery of a laugh. *Misery loves company.* He knew what would happen to them.

And the pain increased. Nauseated he realized that he had *wanted* them to suffer; to go through what he was going through. Icy horror gripped him, and guilt, and to protect himself, he scrabbled madly to his bed, almost in tears. He snatched the uncompleted treatment from where he had put it, sat, read through what he had done, concentrating intensely. Finishing it wasn't important, but it had to be. *Had* to be.

The song-narration. The next verse. He read the original lyrics, thought of Dorothy and Janice, and made an improvisation, wrote it down, revised it again.

"Many years have come and gone now,
All that remain are but a few.
Wand'ring in the back porch of my memories,
In my dreams I turn to you.

Sad. Self pity. Good. He started



writing the next scene, drew lines through what he did, began again. It was going quickly; perhaps he could have it finished by tomorrow. Big deal.

Then he heard the sound. In the back of the room, the threw new boys had gathered around a bed. One of them had brought a transistory radio. McEveety didn't allow radios as students' personal possessions. Hell, it didn't matter.

Still, he listened. There was static at first, then the collage of sounds as they adjusted the tuner. They finally decided on a bubblegum station; it was The Partridge Family singing.

"I'd never be much for writing

"What do you say to a dream that's dying?

"A fragile lifeline that's untying.

"Oh no -- no no."

Then a monitor came in and confiscated the radio and took the three new students with him. Anderson watched it, then stared at the pages of the story before him. That stupid song on the radio. The three boys, probably sent to the Grand Inquisitor. Dorothy and Janice. He didn't dare cry.

Instead, he tried to think about writing. That'd always helped when he'd had problems before. "A Long Trip To Yesterday" was almost finished. He hated to part with it; it had saved him, kept him from succumbing. After it, what? He laid back, tapping his mind for images, ideas, trying not to think of Dorothy, or of Janice. *Story ideas. FF Control. Groth and Wilson in their offices, free to walk in or out or watch TV or sleep or --*

Wallowing in misery wouldn't solve anything, but he did it anyway for quite a while. And then, finally, it occured to him why.

He was out of ideas.

He couldn't write.

It happened to him before. It had happened to Wilson. [The latter had called Anderson up once and said, "David -- gimme some ideas to toss around."] What had Wilson done while waiting for something to congeal? He'd sat in his office with his feet on his desk munching bagels and talking to Groth and Scholz. But that was Wilson at Control.

[What would he do while waiting?]

[How would he fill up the days of flipping mental paper clips?]

[At McEveety, what did one do during a writing deadlock?]

Go to class and study...

Submit to routine...

Follow the rules...

Like everyone else...

The sickness that permeated him suddenly erupted, grew, drowning him from within; and in that terrible amount of black despair he knew he had to get out, leave the school, somehow escape it, at any cost.

He waited carefully that night, fighting the sickness all along, until everyone else in the dorm was asleep. Then, very quietly, he got out of bed, put his clothes on, grabbed his suitcase, and stole out of the dormitory. *Wilson was right,* he said to himself. *I should have done this a long time ago.*

The sickness was better now. As soon as he got out of there, he would just walk. He'd go to wherever he ended up. Maybe to FF Control.

He approached the door to his history class. There was still a light on in there. There was also the sound of sweeping; probably just the janitor. He walked past the door, looking straight ahead. He felt a hand on his shoulder all of a sudden. He froze, then turned around slowly.

It was his teacher. He looked up at her. "Young man, just where do you think you're going?" she asked silkily.

In FF Control, the money poured in. By midnight, Groth counted $459.63 toward Anderson's tuition money. He withdrew $400.00 more from the Artist Fund. "That should cover things rather well," he said to Wilson, chuckling.

"We should tell Anderson now," Wilson replied, "except I want to suprise him."

"Yeah," Groth said. "I imagine he'll be rather pleased."

"Yeah," said Wilson. "Now, all we need do is call the head at McEveety, impersonate Anderson's father's voice, and get him out. No sweat at all. I'm glad I thought of the idea..."

He ducked as an empty Coke cup sailed across the room at him.

David Anderson lay in bed, little more than a mass of pain and shock. Ugly bruises glared at him from underneath the film of sweat on his naked body. He tried to turn over in bed, but quickly abandoned the idea as being too painful. But the physical pain wasn't the worst of it; the hideous emotional sickness was tying him in knots. Tears ran uncontrolled down his face as he struggled to stifle audible sobs.

He didn't remember falling asleep. When he next awoke, several hours later, he hoped that the pain would have dissipated, but, if anything, his bruised flesh hurt more than before. He wondered what she would say to him when he walked into class, if anything.

Not when, Anderson told himself, sudden realization growing in him. *If. No, hold a minute!*

It hit him then. Suddenly he knew! He knew how to get out of the McEveety School once and for all! And better yet, the same course of action would help the other poor kids in the school! Acting on sudden impulse and a squirt of adrenalin, he got painfully up, and put on his clothes. But before he left, there was something he had to do. He removed a sheaf of paper from under his pillow. He got out a pen, wrote for forty minutes straight. Then, he removed an envelope

from his suitcase, stuffed the papers into it, and walked very slowly out of the dormitory so as not to disturb the others there.

Later, he walked into the school's chem lab, selected various reagents and equipment. *I-m suprised I hadn't thought of this before,* he thought. Then, whistling, he set to work with the components.

VIII

By morning, Scholz and Stewart and Wasserman were finished with their investigation of private schools throughout the country. All of the data was fed into the main computer at Control. Some of the schools were instantly rejected as being too much like McEveety, others as not meeting the necessary scholastic requirements, others for other reasons. The list was narrowed down by the machine until, finally, only one was left; a school located in Atlanta, Georgia.

"By the way," Bill Cantey asked Groth, "what's the name of the new school that Anderson will be attending from here on out?"

"I didn't catch the name too well," Groth said. "Galway, or something like that.'

"Well," Cantey said, "since I'm the person most adept at pretending to be his father, age-wise, suppose I call McEveety now?"

"Good idea," said Groth. "Here." He handed Cantey a notepad with the school's number scratched on it. Cantey dialed.

"Hello? This is Robert Anderson. I'd like to speak to Mr. McEveety about my son, David. Yes, that's right..."

Anderson waited patiently in the chem lab once his apparatus had been assembled. Surely word had gotten to McEveety by then that Anderson had called him a number of Anglo-Saxon expletives (a non-fact which he had told several of the younger boys, thus guarenteeing that McEveety would hear about it).

Just as he had planned, McEveety entered the lab. "David," he began.

"Hold it, pop," Anderson said, being deliberately impertinent. "This time I want to do the talking. Look, I've had it with this crummy torture chamber. I'm getting out. And I want to be sure that none of the other gifted children here are subjected to this any longer."

"David, this is unbelievable! How dare you speak to me in that tone of voice! Nevertheless, I came to tell you that you..."

Anderson cut him off with an insolent grin. Then, very calmly, very efficiently, David Anderson released the stopcock that held the yellow liquid in an inverted flask, and allowed it to drain into another solution.

Jim Wilson walked back into his own office, tired from all of the activity; he hadn't slept in two days. Anderson's problem had certainly caused a lot of excitement; everyone at Control had heard about it. He sank into a couch, lifted his feet up, and started to catch forty winks. Just then, his secretary walked in with the morning mail. "How's David," she asked him

"Probably on his way to his new school right now," Wilson said sleepily. "Stu went out to get him and explain a while ago."

"He couldn't have gotten there yet, though," Sharon said, but Wilson was asleep.

When he awoke, it was six-thirty. He decided to watch Walter Cronkite before getting back to work. He switched on the built-in television screen in a wall of the office facing his desk, walked over to the desk, sat down and stretched.

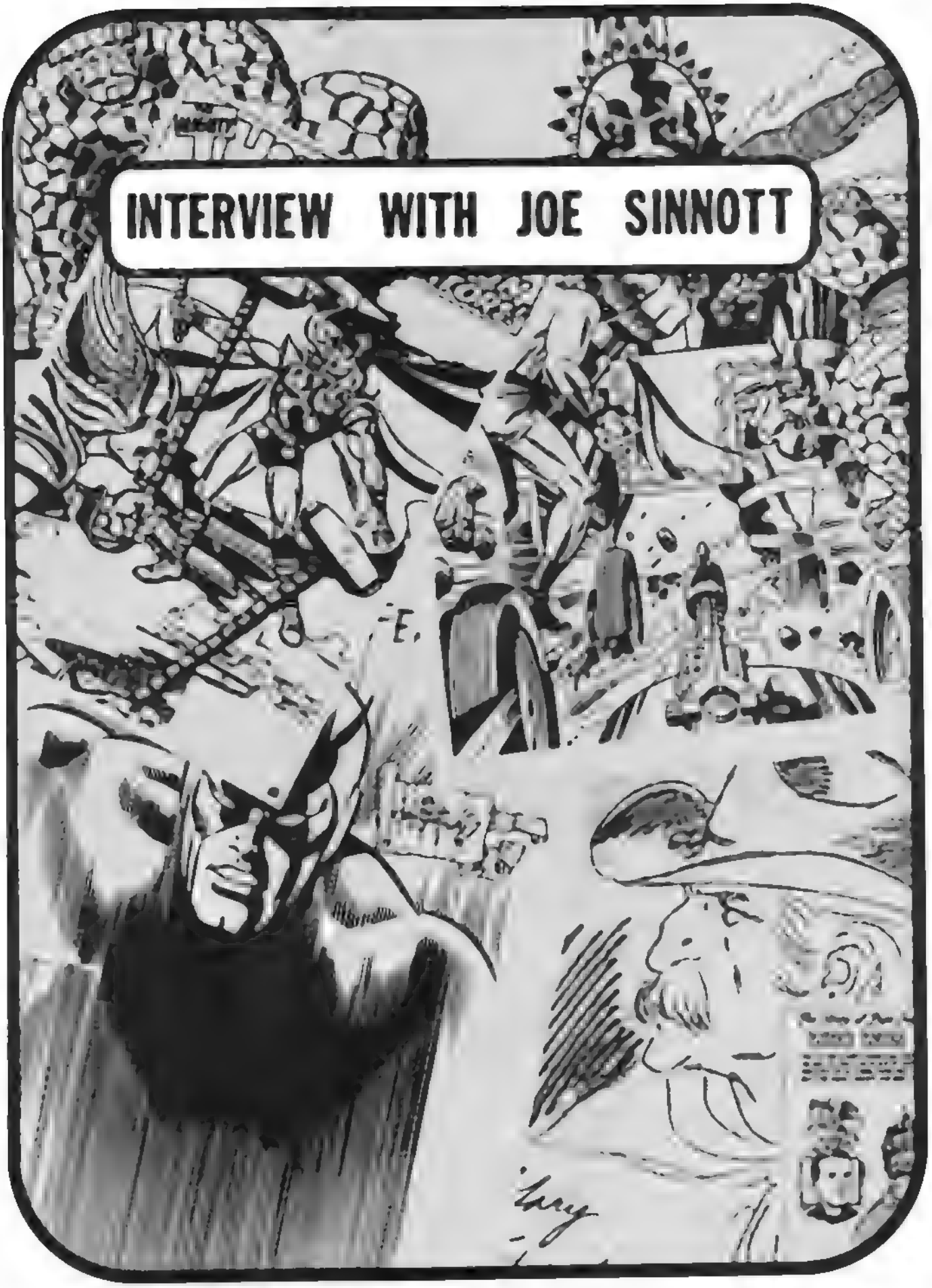
One particular item on the program caught his attention as a photograph of McEveety School flashed on the screen. *"There was a mysterious explosion in the chemistry laboratory at the McEveety School in the early morning,"* Cronkite's voice said. *"Police are conducting an investigation to determine the exact nature of the explosion, though they now conjecture that a student's experiment went wrong, causing the blast. Killed in the explosion were Gregor McEveety, headmaster of the school, and David Anderson, a student there. No one else was hurt..."*

Wilson, thunderstruck, got up and switched the set off. As he did so, he noticed a brown envelope that Sharon had brought in with the morning mail. There was no return address, but Wilson recognized the handwriting on the address.

The envelope bore a single enclosure — the completed treatment for "A Long Trip To Yesterday." He read it through; it was a story about a man who had lost almost everything, seeing what was left of his world changed, altered, mechanized. It started out relatively mildly, and got progressively more intense. Wilson then understood, as he read the closing narration.

"As the seasons gently pass by my window,
Visions of the past are growing dim.
Songs we sang in the evening
Are now forgotten in the wind,
Are now forgotten in the wind."

ILLUSTRATED BY CARTER SCHOLZ & ROBERT HUGEL


INTERVIEW WITH JOE SINNOTT

INTERVIEW WITH JOE SINNOTT

CONDUCTED BY GARY GROTH, BILL WILSON, & DUFFY VOHLAND

GARY: When did you first become interested in drawing?

JOE: As early as I can remember -- we had school teachers as borders in our house. We had like a rooming house, and one of the teachers brought me I can still remember in - a large box of crayons. I must have been about 3 years old. It had a big Indian on the box cover. I must have drawn that Indian til I knew it by heart. I did it so often, with crayons she gave me. That may have been the start of how I got interested in drawing. We also had this fellow who worked in a diner as a border. He was from Germany. I think he was on a submarine in the first world war. He would come home maybe six o'clock at night and sit in the living room. I was about 7 at the time. He had these white pants on, so at the end of the day he would draw all over his pants with a soft pencil! *[Laughter]* He would draw - Indians, soldiers, y'know. And at that time I thought he was terrific. He stayed with us for about 5 years, and every night he would draw all over his white pants, all kinds of characters, even western characters though he was from Germany. Even though he was a border I used to play with him, y'know, he was just like a dad to me. When he moved away I really cried like a baby. I missed him. He put me on the road to drawing, I think. But then again, I copied from "Smilin' Jack" when I was a kid. This was one of my favorite strips. And a little later on, Alex Raymond. I was crazy about the early Caniff. I still think the old "Terry," y'know, '34 to '37 before he got too realistic, had so much charm that that's what's missing in comics today. You remember -- the button eyes and so on. There's a little bit of it today in TREASURE CHEST, in Chuck White. It's a little realistic, but has some of the old Caniff flavor. I thought there was a lot of charm to that. There was a lot of caricature to the characters, particularly Terry and Connie. But there was a lot of action. But then again, it might have been the age. I was about 8 at the time that Terry came out. You couldn't wait for the next day; it was such an adventure to wait! But maybe it's because today you've seen it a hundred times or a thousand times and it's not novel anymore. But in those days it was really an adventure to wait from day to day to see these strips come out because they were new and nothing like it had been seen before. And the same with Flash Gordon. You couldn't wait from Sunday to Sunday. It was like waiting for the Saturday serials, only the Sunday strips were just as exciting as the serials. The middle 30's were great for kids and comics.

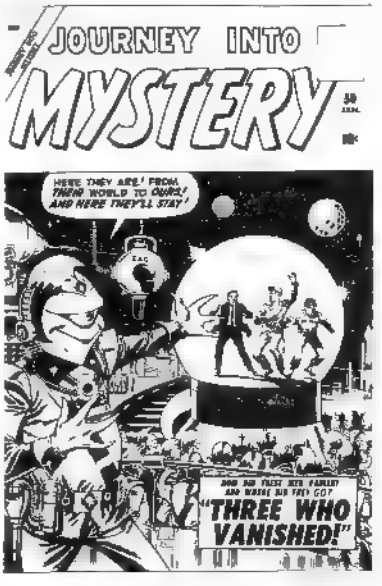
GARY: Could you give us some background information on yourself?

JOE: Well, I lived in Saugerties *[N.Y.]* til I was about 12 years old, and then moved about 5 miles away to a little farm. I hated to move because I lived right in the heart of town. I was interested in sports and I was on them, well we didn't have a little league in those days, but we had our teams. I just hated to move away from all my friends at that age, and where I moved to, was a farm where you couldn't see your next door neighbor. And the only way I could get into town was to hitchike. But once I got used to the farm I really enjoyed farm living. It was a small farm, but it was a lot of fun. When I was in high school I played on the baseball team and soccer team. It was a small school, there were only about 500 kids in it. Now there's around 2500 because IBM has moved into the area; it's really grown. The old days were nice.

Well, I was in the service from '44 to '46, in the Navy with the Seabees and drove a truck. In fact I never drove a car when I was home; I didn't know how to drive a car. But anyway, we went to Okinawa and after the war I went to work for a cement mill upstate when I live. My father was a packhouse foreman for 40 years up there in the plant. I knew I wanted to be an artist -- a cartoonist of some kind eventually, but I was enjoying playing ball, etc. and I just wasn't interested in going to school at the time; I was out of high school. But then I got tired of working. I was working at a lime quarry and it was 30° below zero at times during the winter. It was pretty rough, so I looked through the papers and I saw the Cartoonist's & Illustrator's School advertised, which was on West 89th at the time. So I came down here in '49 or '50 and that's when I started my art schooling.

GARY: Before you started school there, did you read comics back in your youth?

JOE: Oh yeah, very much. I used to have to walk 2 miles to the general store which sold comics. They had every type of comic there. The big comics those days -- it's funny, the Marvel comics didn't appeal to me then. I enjoyed Hawkman because it looked so much like Alex Raymond's work. I'm sure the guy copied a lot of Raymond's figures. That appealed to me, though I never knew who did it, I don't believe he ever signed his name. And The Batman was one of my favorites. I was never very enthused with Superman, but Batman always impressed me. But Hawkman -- the artwork for that time was great. I can't remember one Hawkman story but the artwork impressed me very much. And I always used to like Congo Bill in ACTION COMICS for some reason. I would buy ACTION COMICS just for the Congo Bill story, not for Superman. Maybe it was because it looked something like Mungle Jim which I liked. Superman never really impressed me, although I did like Jack Kirby's "Boy Commando's" a little later during the war. It must have been about '43 or '44. Do you remember the Boy



Commando's?

GARY: I don't have any of the original comics, but I've read a few of their stories from friends' copies.

JOE: Oh that was tremendous. He had these little characters; one with a dirby hat, etc. They were kids and fought the war in Germany. They were called the Boy Commandos. They were terrific. You remember them, Bill?

BILL: Yeah. I have a very small collection of them.

JOE: They were very good.

GARY: Did Kirby do <u>all</u> the artwork on the series?

JOE: Yes, Simon did the inking however. That's the first Kirby work that I was aware of. You should look downstairs, there may be some floating around. You'd really be impressed by that. It looked very much like the stuff Kirby does today. But it was a funny thing. I don't remember Kirby doing Captain America at all. I just don't remember buying a Captain America book. It's funny -- a dime was a lot of money in those days, but somehow I always got every ACTION COMIC that came out. And Hawkman too. Hawkman must have been in another book; he couldn't have had his own book. I don't think at that time. Well, I know where I got the money. I used to sell junk every Saturday. Like old rubber tires and scraps of brass; anything I could find, y'know. Every Saturday the junk dealer would come through ringing his bell. He had this old truck, and he would weigh your stuff. He would give you ten, fifteen cents. First thing you know you're down in the store buying comic books. You never missed the books, y'know. You'd buy them faithfully.

GARY: Do you still have all of those old books?

JOE: I wish I did. I don't know what happened to them. Just like some of the books you probably had when you were younger. You threw them away or something.

GARY: How did you begin your career as an illustrator?

JOE: Well, like I said, I was going to the Cartoonist's & Illustrator's School. When I went down there I really wanted to be a sports cartoonist or go into advertising. I really wasn't interested in doing comic book work, or comic-strip work. However, I would copy Caniff and Raymond, but I really didn't want to do a strip.

ALL BRAND-NEW BATTLE ADVENTURES
BATTLE
WELL SARGE... YA GOT ANY MORE BRIGHT IDEAS?!!
SURE! JUST WATCH ME!
HA! THERE IS NO PLACE FOR THEM TO RETREAT TO! ATTACK!

But, anyway, after the foundation class and I went into the Cartoonists class, Tom Gill saw my work; he was one of the instructors down there, though he wasn't my instructor at the time. He was doing work for Dell and Marvel. Dell, in those days, did a lot of books on the films, like UNION PACIFIC, etc. Tom asked me if I was interested in working on his books. He had this little studio in Rockville Center and there was another fellow who worked for him from C&I; he wasn't in my class though. His name was Norman Steinberger, very good at horses. We would go out there on Saturdays and Tom had a closed-in porch, it was like a sun porch, and made it into a studio. Norman would pencil the westerns and I would ink them and Tom would put the heads on the characters to make it look like his work. Tom was a prodigious worker. He would teach all day in the school, and he would draw all night for the comics; til 10, 12, 1 o'clock in the morning. I don't know how he did it. In fact, I was talking to him last night. He was here. First time I've seen him in 15 years. He's taught a lot of fellows down at the school. But anyway then we got the RED WARRIOR book to work

on from Marvel, and also Kent Blake. We passed it around; some would do the pencilling, some would do the inking. Y'know I'd do five pages of pencilling, another fellow might do another five pages. Tom would do all the heads, so it would all look like the same person had done it, and suprisingly it did! Then after a while, I was doing everything on the Kent Blake strip. Tom had asked me to do everything. The pencilling for Kent Blake and the inking. I did that for about 6 months to a year. I was still at school, and it was pretty difficult because I was doing it at night and Saturdays. And to add to the chaos, I got married at this time.

So then one day I thought that I'd take some of my samples and I'd go over to Marvel and see if I could pick anything up. But before that, I had a job for St. John's; I was in school for about six months and I thought, "Boy, my stuff is terrific! I'll start making the rounds." *[Laughter]* Someone told me about St. John's Publishing Company, so I went down there and they gave me a five page filler for a MOPSY comic book called "Trudy," and I did that and never heard from them again (my first bubble burst). It wasn't bad -- I thought it was terrific for that period, but anyway, back to Marvel. Stan wanted to see how I could pencil it. He gave it to me the day before school went on vacation. I went home and I brought the pencil job back after vacation; it was two weeks before Stan saw the pencils. And it was only one page, so he was probably wondering what in the world happened to it. Anyway, I brought it in and he seemed to like it -- a little bit. So he gave me a story to do. It was a 5 page story for a Kent Blake book that Tom Gill was still doing, but this was a 5 page filler story. So, after that, every time I would complete a story, Stan would give me another one. But that was at a time (1951) when comics were really hitting it big and there were more scripts than artists. Anyone could really get a job in comics if they could do anything half-way decently, at least it appeared that way.

So, that's how I got started. And I really didn't work for anyone else until things got slow in '57. Everything I did was for Marvel (Timely), and there wasn't a week that I didn't have a script or two to work on for them. Of course, they were all kinds; war, western, science fiction, and of course, '52 and '53 when they had the big horror craze; before the code came along. It was a great period to be in comics -- I enjoyed the variety.

GARY: Were there any comic book artists back then who inspired you?

JOE: Yeah! I liked Reed Crandall's work. And I li-ed Severin's work even back when he was with FIRST PRIZE COMICS; he used to do these westerns. He had an Indian character, I forget who it was, but I used to buy those books. I still have them in fact. He was pencilling, but Bill Elder was inking it. Severin has always impressed me. In fact, Stan Lee, I think, was always tremendously impressed by Severin's work. He was pretty happy when John came over to Marvel to work. But some of the guys that worked for EC in those days, even Wally Wood, who was quite young, and just out of school, he was just a little bit before me at C&I, but he did some great work for EC. I'm sure they didn't get paid much in those days, but they really knocked themselves out, I thought. Al Williamson did nice stuff for them; much cruder than he does today, but still excellent. They were all good.

But Marvel -- Russ Heath did some nice work in the '50's for Marvel. But Kirby wasn't there at the time. Do you remember Russ Heath? He does work for DC now. He did terrific war books and horror books. But there were so many guys that worked for Marvel that aren't in comics today, that were fairly good. I'll tell you who was very good. I never see his work anymore; someone told me he worked for Caniff, but I really can't be sure. His name is Kida. Are you familiar with his work?

GARY: No.

JOE: His work is very similar to Frank Robbins, who is similar to Caniff in their style. But I really enjoyed his work. His work is like Caniff's, his slashes, his wrinkles, his heavy blacks, etc. His mystery stories were really good. Stan Lee was really impressed by Kida's work. If he wanted to show you someone's work to have you get inspiration from, it was usually Kida's work. He'd say, "This is what I like," Stan, not that he would want you to copy someone's work, but he would always show someone else's work to another artist. In other words, if he wanted my work to be improved upon, he would show me another artist's work, like Kida's.

Another guy who used to impress me, he came later at Marvel, but during the slow period during '57 to '60 before the super heroes really made their comeback, was Don Heck. He did an awful lot of work for

Marvel. And his science fiction stories, I thought, were on a par with anyone's. Even EC's good period when Williamson and Wood were doing their science fiction. Don Heck had a nice style, and his backgrounds were fantastic. They were terrific; his futuristic cities, y'know, they were tremendous. I was very impressed

with his work. Although I can't understand why he doesn't appear to do much artwork today. At that period, when things were bad, he was in every Marvel book it seemed, although Marvel didn't have too many books. He really carried Marvel through that black period. Another great over at Marvel was the late Joe Maneely -- a real favorite of us all.

GARY: What "bad period" was this?

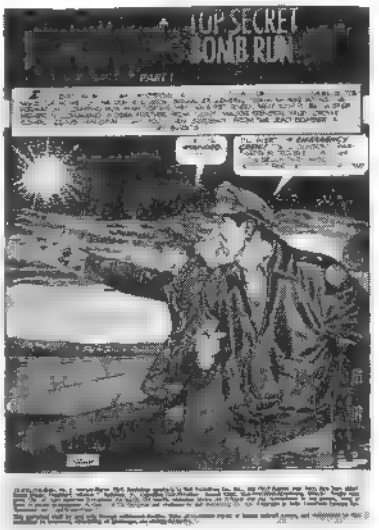
JOE: '57 and things were going quite slow for Marvel. The comics code had killed the horror trend around '54 and that was the big trend in that period. So, Marvel and all the other companies had to go back to the old standard; westerns, war, which wasn't big anymore because the Korean War was over, and the romance, which had always held its own. Science fiction. Science fiction held its own also. Horror was the big thing in the early '50's. The comics code killed it.

I remember, in fact it was Martin who was telling me, this friend of yours, and I didn't realize it at the time, but he said that when the comics code came into being, they held up a drawing; it was a picture by the Associated Press and one of the photo services. The comics code administrator was showing the change the comics commission had made in a drawing for a horror comic to meet their requirements. They showed what their changes were. And the drawing they held up was one that I had done called "Sarah." And I remembered when I did it. This must have been around '56, and I remember when the book came out; everything was changed. The heads were all changed. There were no more ghastly expressions. You couldn't show a mean expression, you couldn't show speed lines, or even have a sound effect like SPLATT! They really went too far in their restrictions. I would like to see the original drawing, though. I would like to compare it with the code's pic. Although I do have the comic book and they did make many corrections.

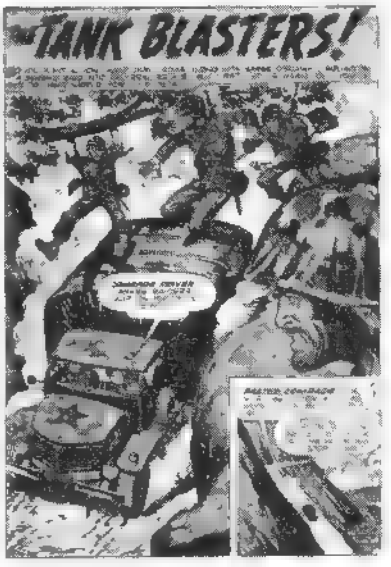
For that period, there were a lot of comics, I think you'll agree, that were pretty deplorable. The ones that I was doing for Marvel -- you didn't take them seriously. You didn't realize kids were reading these and taking them seriously. But you couldn't see the harm in them. I couldn't anyway. They were *fun*, very much fun to do. Every story was different to a degree. It was fun -- you could use your imagination and it was just a fun thing to do. But you didn't realize that you might be affecting these kids. They *might* have been; it might have affected these little kids, although I really don't see how they could have. Marvel's books weren't as bad as the smaller company's. I can't think of their names right now, but there were some that were quite sexy for the fifties, and really quite bloodthirsty. EC had some that were pretty horrible, but they were done so well, in other words, the art was so good and the stories were so interesting, that you didn't mind the gore. The endings had a slight moral to them. The other books (by the smaller companies) had no meaning to the stories, so the gore is what came through, and that made them very undesirable I think. They were the ones that needed to be tempered down.

DUFFY: Do you think it would be a good idea for the code to be revised?

JOE: They had a very big discussion about that yesterday afternoon down at the [ACBA] meeting. Gil Kane made a very good point. He doesn't think it should be eliminated. But he felt there should be an open end to one end of the code, to speak. In other words, give the artists and writers just a little bit more room to manuever, to appeal to a different taste. Although the code is a little bit liberalized than it used to be, I'm sure you'll agree with that. I did an Indian



story one time, when the code first came into being. It was called "When the Sioux Strike!" Anyway, two Indians were fighting to determine who was going to be the leader of the tribe. They had knives, which you've seen in the movies, and which you've seen in real life. I didn't show one Indian killing the other one; they were just wrestling. One held the other Indian's arm over his head like this *[showing the movement and stance of the Indian on Gary]*. In the last panel, the Indian had his knife down at his side. He was speaking to the guy who was running guns for the Indians. Anyway, when the revisions were made, they took the knives out of their hands. So, what you saw, were two Indians like this *[again, showing us the stance as "corrected" by the code]*, one looking at the other, then they were wrestling with one another, and last, the guy had his hand down at his arm down by his knee. And you wondered what happened to the other Indian! You didn't see it, but in the original story, you knew he was dead by the knife. In the revised story, you didn't know what happened to him. In other words, they just went a little too far.



DUFFY: Do you think ACBA could get some changes made in the Code?

JOE: I don't think they could. The code was very adament yesterday about making any changes at all. Stan Lee asked them if they were working on more liberalized viewpoint of the code, and the representative from the code wouldn't commit himself at all. But I really think they'll liberalize it a little bit. But as far as having an open end policy as Gil Kane suggested -- to give the artist and writer real freedom that they would like, I don't think that will come to be. Not yet. Although it would be nice. In other words, to have books that would appeal to a more serious buyer. I really don't think it's going to happen.

DUFFY: Do you think that if the code were liberalized too much, some companies would go overboard on the sex, gore, etc?

JOE: Yes. I don't think there's any question about that. I don't think it would last too long. It would clamp down in some respects, on something like that. In other words, they wouldn't allow it to go on for any length of time.

BILL: What do you think of a comic book published outside the jurisdiction of the code?

JOE: Are there any that aren't approved by the comics code today?

GARY: I don't think the Dell books were.

JOE: They didn't have the code seal? They were censored by their own administrators, right? The Code doesn't trust the individual companies as far as cen-

boring themselves, and I think the companies learned a lesson as far as their '54 period restrictions put on them by the code. I'm sure they know enough from prior experience, what should or should not be censored. I'm sure they could eliminate the code entirely, and the individual comic companies, the big ones, not the ones that would capitalize on not having a comics code, could censor their own material to a degree where the parents could find no fault. Don't you agree with that? I really do. I don't think there's a need for the code.

GARY: The problem is the distributors. They won't distribute what doesn't have the Code Seal implanted on the covers.

JOE: That's true. The code means something to the distributors. I'm sure they don't even know what's inside the books, but they see the seal there, and that means everything to them. That's a point. The trouble is, comics were meant for kids when they originated, and no matter what the content of them today is, even though it's geared for a more adult audience, the distributor still thinks it's a kids book, 7-8-9-10 year old book, and they have no idea what's inside. You have to agree, the EC books were far ahead of the 8-9-10 year old kid. The Ray Bradbury stories were pretty mature, and obviously over the head of the younger readers.

GARY: To get back to questions about you, was your first professional work done in comics, or was it in another art medium?

JOE: Well, the first job I was ever paid for was a fast drawing I did of an army officer during the early part of the war. I was about 15 years old, and I was given 15 dollars for it. But the first job I was paid for in comics was a 5 page filler for a MOPSY comic book for the Saint John's Publishing Company called Trudy. I forget what the rate was back then, but it wasn't bad. This was in 1949 while I was attending C&I. But the first big account I had was with Marvel in 1950 with Tom Gill, and the reason, I'll answer your next question, Gary, the reason I went to Marvel was because I was familiar with their books, working on them with Tom, as he had a Marvel account. He had Red Warrior and Kent Blake and I was pencilling and inking Kent Blake, and also helping on the Red Warrior. So when I felt I was ready to go out on my own, I went to Marvel because I knew their books and I felt, well, Marvel was big and they had a lot of scripts that were available. So I did quite a bit of work from that year, 1950 until 1957 when they had such a backlog of books finished that they suspended operations as far as giving out scripts and buying art. I guess they could carry along for, gee, about six months to a year on the books they had already completed; at least that's the impression I got.

GARY: To change the subject for a minute, have you ever painted anything?

JOE: No, I've worked a little bit in colored inks, but never painted in oils or tempra or anything like that. I've done a lot of wash in advertising art that I've done. In fact, I enjoy doing fashion work very much and I also enjoy doing sports cartoons, but I've never really done any work in color before. I still do colored crossword cover magazines, but these are done with acetate overlays.

GARY: Are there any painters today that you particularly enjoy?

JOE: I've always liked Norman Rockwell because I believe he's basically a cartoonist, but also because his work is technically amazing. As for his storytelling, they've got such a human interest story behind them. He's done some terrific things such as the homecoming soldier, the story-telling marine and countless others. One of the best that I feel he ever did was this "story-telling marine," I think it was called. The marine was sitting in this garage telling of his exploits during the war and it's a beauty to behold. It was a first place winner in a Society of Illustrators exhibit. He's done so many, in fact, I used to cut out his covers and save them. But I also like Tom Lovell. He does terrific sea scapes and he's an adventure type illustrator. I also like Albert Dorne's cartoon type of illustration. And with the western artists, as I mentioned before, I like the old timers like Remington and Russell. I also like Fred Lutiken's stuff, who's contemporary.

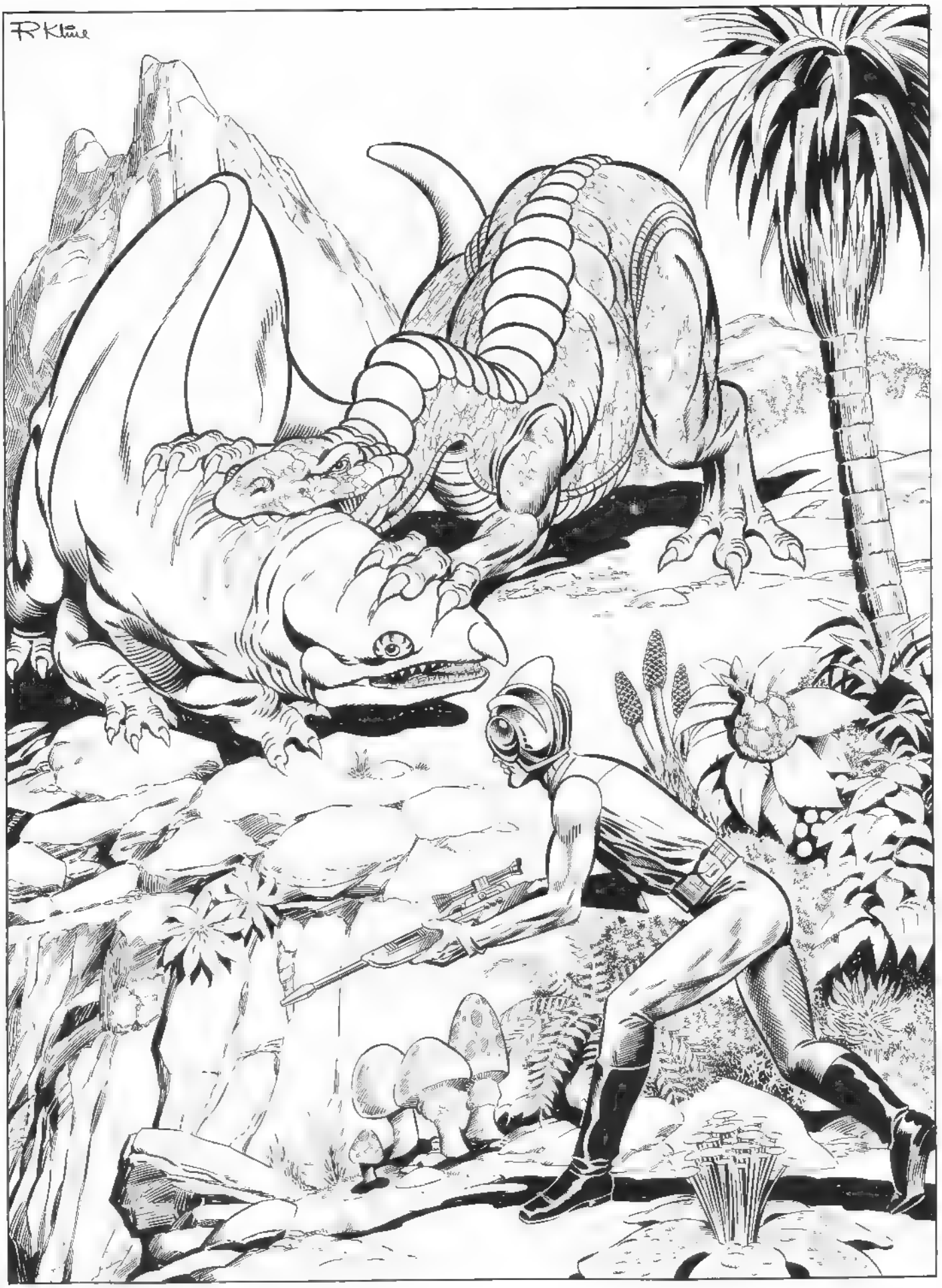
GARY: Well, I've always asked the artists I've interviewed if they could explain a little about the technique they use in their work, and all of them have difficulty in answering this beca-

JOE: Well, that's a hard word to define, technique. In fact, I think every artist answers it in that way, really because when you say technique, I think you mean, do I use a smooth style, rough style, heavy blacks, fine lines, thick lines, you know. I think that's what you mean by technique, right?

GARY: Right, right.

JOE: Well, when I do the superheroes, I try to keep it slick and smooth, because that's the way the superhero age is supposed to be. You know, modern, everything clear-cut, metalic, and glossy. But if I was doing a western, I would try to keep it rough, as the subject matter is rough, with buckskin, dirt, and rocks, etc. I'm conscious of what type of story I'm inking. Like when I worked for TREASURE CHEST; if it's a sea story or a war story or a biographical thing, there isn't much of a change in the inking, but it's there and you can make it out.

RIGHT: Robert Kline pencil illustration, inked by Joe Sinnott.


R Klug

GARY: Do you use any special or different techniques when you ink different artists' work?

JOE: I don't think so. Some artists pencil with a feathering type of pencil line, it's like a sketchy line and you have a tendency of feathering a little bit too much on them, which I don't feel is too good. I used to feather an awful lot and I've been trying to break away from it, but it seems to be the thing to do. I've seen some real good, sharp things that were presented to different companies and they were turned down. They felt that they wouldn't go over. The work contained sharp blacks and whites which I really liked, but I don't know. I guess that some people don't feel that's the way to work some of these books.

GARY: Doesn't Vince Colletta use a lot of those short lines, real scratchy lines?

JOE: Right, right. Vince can do some terrific inking when he wants to, but I don't like the way he puts the fine lines in the muscles. I feel he uses too many lines. I may do the same think occasionally, but I don't like it. I like the solids and I think it makes it like, y'know, Frank Giacoia's inking. He feathers occasionally, but his lines are so bold, and clean, and sharp and crisp. That's the way I like them.

GARY: Frank Giacoia's inks are very similar to yours, aren't they?

JOE: He did a book one time, an annual of the FANTASTIC FOUR and I thought for sure it was my book. I looked through the whole book and I would have sworn up and down it was mine until something hit me. I think it was that he didn't have a couple of little dots where I occasionally put them on stones, and I suddenly realized that it must've been Frank's work. But, y'know, I was really suprised. I thought sure that I did it. I think our styles are a bit similar, but I think his is a little bolder than mine. His lines have a little more force to them.

GARY: Do you change the artist's pencils much in the inks, say in the case of John Buscema who's very tight, or in the case of Neal Adams, who I hear is very loose?

JOE: It's hard to say. People say that Neal is loose, but in the two stories that I've worked on, Thor, they were quite tight, although the middle and backgrounds were loose on occasion. It started out quite loose and in the middle he seemed to get the feel of the book and from there on, it was a breeze to ink. I was telling someone yesterday, I don't know if I told you Gary, but the pencils were so beautiful in spots, they were hard to believe. I thought Buscema's pencils were so beautiful, but parts of the Adams story were so really tremendous I thought Buscema had a hand in it. But I would rather ink Buscema than Adams, because John seems more consistant. Neal, it seems, has so many irons in the fire, that sometimes it appears as though he's rushing a little bit and other days when he may not have too much to do, he's the equal of anyone. But I would rather ink Buscema's work because you know that every page is going to be consistantly excellent.

GARY: You pencilled several of the early THOR's, didn't you?

JOE: There must have been four or five, at least four. I can't remember exactly. I know I did at least four.

GARY: Well, how did you acquire that job and why did you stop pencilling and relinquish the job to Kirby?

JOE: Well, actually, I inked the first THOR book. Kirby pencilled the first THOR. You may have remembered. It was JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY eighty-something. I think it was in the eighties. It was a three part story and it was the introduction of Thor, and I thought it was a terrific character with great potential. I don't know whether Stan or Jack created it, but anyway, I thought it was really going to be something. I don't think I inked any more THOR's until I started pencilling it. At that time I was doing science fiction for Marvel. I don't know if I did any war or not, but this was in the early sixties. I think it was '61 or '62 if I remember correctly. So Stan just sent me JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY number 90, I don't know, it might have been 89, and it happened to be a Thor so I pencilled and inked a couple of the books, but I feel it was one of the worst things I've ever done because I just didn't have the feel of the superhero type story. I just couldn't handle it the way it should have been done.

GARY: Does Stan keep you continually busy or does he limit your work load so you can do other things besides working on comics?

JOE: Years ago I feel he would have preferred that all his artists do as much work for Marvel as possible and not work on the outside. And I think an artist would rather do it this way because deadlines conflict and it's quite a strain on the artist. But I have such a good account with TREASURE CHEST, and I've been with them for so long, that I wouldn't give it up. I like to do their stories. They're interesting to do, they're varied, every one of them is different, y'know, they're biographical — war stories, sea stories, science fiction. They're just fun to do. Like in the old days with Marvel. But Stan has always asked me if I could fit in another strip here or there.

GARY: Is Stan open to suggestions from you?

JOE: Yes, I think so. I really don't remember ever suggesting anything to him. I know that when I started inking the FF, I

SEE YOU TOMORROW BILL I'VE GOT TO CRACK THE BOOKS TILL SACK TIME
MY 2.3 AVERAGE IS OKAY BUT IT COULD BE BETTER
THAT'S IT BROTHER DREAMLAND HERE I COME
RUN RUN RUN
NEXT MORNING...
HOPE I CAN UN-K NK MY LEGS TODAY.
I WORKED HARD TO EARN THIS TROPHY AND IT LOOKS LIKE I'LL HAVE TO WORK EVEN HARDER JUST TO MAKE THE BASKETBALL TEAM LINEUP WELL THAT'S WHAT I LIKE
STATE
THE RELATIONSH PS HERE ARE EASY TO SEE
TWO HOURS UNT L PRACTICE ..

Two samples of a newspaper, syndicated strip Joe tried to sell 6 or 7 years ago, unfortunately, with no luck. It was called, "HAWK, ALL-AMERICAN." Joe commented, "Quite different from the campus scene today."

was no stranger to Jack's work, I inked Kirby in the past and I used to make changes here and there where I felt they could improve the work. Stan told me when I did the first couple of FF's, I think it was issue 44, he said, "Joe, Kirby is so good, but if you see something you could improve, don't be afraid to go ahead and do it." And he's never criticized anything I've ever done on Kirby's work, although I do remember Sol asking me to make the Black Panther's costume more black.

I know there's a couple other stories I've done with some of the other fellows where they'd, say, make the shoulders of the character a little bigger, etc., because certain artists have a tendency of making the muscles and everything, a little more natural and not how the superhero figure should be drawn. That has happened and I hope that the artist doesn't feel that I'm making any changes on my own. But I don't like to change the artist's work too much, Gary, because every artist feels that the way he puts it down is the way it should be. Like I changed Kirby's ears a little bit and his eyes on his girls just a little bit. Not much, just a little bit here and there. I'm sure Kirby never resented it, but I'm sure some artists might and I feel they have a right to. I'm sure *I* would. I did with the Kent Blake stories. I would draw the ears, in fact, I would draw the heads and Tom Gill would change them and they would look like his heads, which was right, really, because it was his strip.

GARY: Who's pencils have been the most difficult for you to ink?

JOE: Well, I only inked one of Don Heck's stories, and I don't know why, I forget the story now -- it might have been Captain America. Yeah, I think it was Captain America and I had difficulty with it. I was really suprised that it was so loose. I've always been an admirer of Don Heck's work. In fact, I feel his science fiction work is on a par with anyone's. I don't think anyone could top his science fiction, not even Wally Wood or Al Williamson back in the EC days. But I was suprised at the change of style from his pencils to his inks. The pencils were very loose, much looser than I expected because his inks are so tight and complete. He might have been rushed on it. I don't know if someone else had done the breakdowns on it, but I would certainly like to ink some of Don Heck's science fiction. I didn't enjoy doing Gil Kane's Captain America. I don't know why. Maybe because it was such a departure from Kirby, but I did have a little difficulty with it. I really don't know why, but I didn't like to ink that one. I guess you have to work with someone for awhile before things begin to click.

GARY. Do you know how the code operates? Does the code censor the pages before they get to you and have you make any needed corrections-

JOE: I'm not really too familiar with the code, but I do know that the art changes are made after the artwork is finished. In fact, I don't know if I talked to you earlier about the horror strip I did back in the early fifties; this is the one story they used as an example to show how the code was operating. In other words, the director of the commision, I think it was Murphy at the time, presented before the press and wire services, a picture of a panel I did from "Sarah," a story I did for Stan. One picture showed how the panel was before the code changed it, and the other picture showed how it looked after the code "corrected" it. It was a presentation to show how the commision and the comics code cleaned up the comics so to speak. I have the book at home and I do remember that they changed all my heads. It was all quite ludicrous. That's the only thing that I'm aware of. I don't know if there was any blood in that story, I really don't remember.

Even at that period when they first started the code, you couldn't show speed lines, or "splat," "pow," etc. or someone hitting another person in the jaw. You couldn't show speed lines of the "smack!" or the noise. If someone was shooting a gun, say a wagon train was being attacked by Indians, you couldn't show the Indian falling in the same panel where the gun was being shot. You had to show the rifle in one panel and the Indian falling in the other, but you couldn't show the actual shooting, which is a little ridiculous, I think.

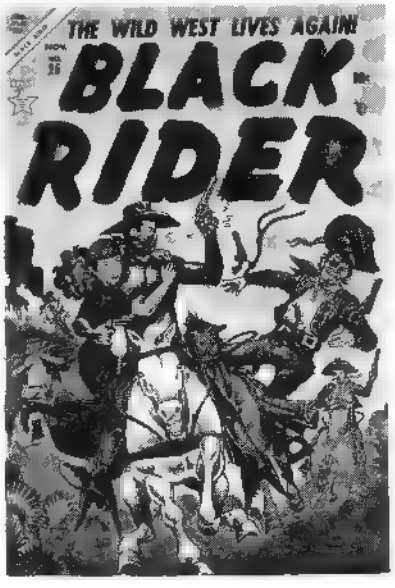
I do feel the code did clean up a lot of the small companies which were really exploiting the market with their sex and gore to a great extent. EC had a lot of gore, but there stories were so good that it over-shadowed the gore in their books

GARY: Well, they had such classical art by Wood, Williamson, Ingels...

JOE: That's right. All those guys. Graham Ingels and George Evans, they were all good. Reed Crandall did some nice stuff for EC too. The horror, he was terrific at that, and his pirate classics were unsurpassed.

GARY: Do you think the comic book as we know it, will be around, say ten, fifteen years from now?

JOE: I really don't see how there's going to be much change. They'll still have war to a small degree, they'll have western, romance -- they've been around for thirty years now. They change very little really. The art, naturally, is improving all the time and so is the writing, but they'll still be great strides made in the art and in the writing, which is only understandable because of the competition. It gets greater and greater every year. You've got to do better work than the next guy or at least do as well, but better than the year before. You can see the improvement all the time; even from the superheroes of today to those of just five, six years ago. The techniques are that much better and the artwork is more imaginative and the stories are better in many cases. They have to improve but they'll still be around in the same form that they are today, but there may be a different type of comic for a different segment of the population; for the older people, which will come to be too, y'know a more realistic type of book which I'm looking forward to.



BILL: I was wondering what type of comic strip you feel most comfortable with. Science fiction, war, superhero, romance, etc. What do you feel you do your best work in?

JOE: Well, what I feel I do the best on, Bill, is the straight illustrative type stuff. Like I do for TREASURE CHEST, eg., the stories on Pope John; the Kennedy and McArthur; and Eisenhower and all the other biographical things that I've done, the historical type story. The type that Reed Crandall is really famous for. I really enjoy this type, but I also enjoy doing light, humor type stuff, but I don't have the opportunity very often.

It seems when someone wants me to work for them, they want me to do the realistic, illustrative type strip. Maybe it's because I put a lot into the backgrounds, much atmosphere. I put a lot of work into this type of strip. But my weakness is the superhero. That's the one I feel weak on. I really enjoyed doing the old westerns and the war and science fiction, etc. I felt I was quite capable at that. The navy stories and the variety that Marvel offered. But the superheroes; I'm not a good figure man, at least not as good as I feel I should be. And with superheroes, that's the one thing you have to be. A good figure man can compensate for a lot of weaknesses. I feel I can pick up anyone else's work and no matter how good they are, I feel I can do justice to their pencils. And many times I feel that I can improve it a little bit. So, I think I'm really strong at improving another artist's work.

DUFFY: Do you think ACBA will do a lot to raise the literary content of the comic book?

JOE: Well, Duffy, they seem to be quite determined in their goals, and I was really suprised at this. At first I thought it would be more of a social group like the Cartoonists & Illustrators Society, but they do seem real bent on attaining these goals. I don't see how they could fail to succeed to a small degree. No matter how much they succeed, it will be an improvement. I think something will come of it, I really do. I was really amazed at the interest some of the fellows had in it. Some have dofferent interests than others. Many are in to see if we can attain a better financial status, more benefits and to just improve all aspects of the business. There are other fellows, I suppose, who don't care much about the financial aspect of it, they just want to present their ideas, their own type of stories, to improve the books in that respect. But I feel ACBA will improve the whole field; the financial end, the upgrading of the books themselves, and maybe a new line of books. I really feel they're trying all these avenues. I think they'll be successful to some extent.

GARY: Did you get many interview requests years ago?

JOE: No. I was never interviewed at all until I won a couple of those Alley Awards. And then I would get requests through the mail, for interviews and drawings, and things like that, y'know. I appreciate it, and I try to fill everything that's requested of me. It's hard at times, but it's what I would want if I were a young fellow, and requesting this from someone else. In other words, I put myself in the other fellow's place. I do appreciate the interest they have in me. I hope it's sincere, and I'm sure, in most cases, it is. I do some drawings at the con, but I would rather do most of them at home, and have the fellows get something a little better than they would get down there, holding the pad on my knee.

GARY: What do you consider to be the best all time comic book strip?

JOE: Well, I really do feel it was the FANTASTIC FOUR. Not because I was any part of it. I feel that way because of the characters -- the secondary characters. I feel that the Thing has been the best character since Superman and Batman. I really do. I don't feel that he's been exploited enough, however. I do feel that the secondary characters -- the Inhumans were never exploited enough either. Y'know, the secondary characters that Jack had running through his book - so many of them. Dr. Doom, Silver Surfer and all these. I think you might agree with me on that, Gary. What do you think?

GARY: Yeah, I agree. I think the FF has been the showcase for more imaginative characters than any other long-running series.

JOE: But then again, maybe it was because I was so close to the FF. The DC books -- I'm really not knowledgeable enough -- I don't follow them that much. I'm not aware of the changes going on over at DC. I do buy BATMAN occasionally. I really enjoy Dick Giordano's work. Dick's a good friend of mine, and I like his work. I think he did a terrific job on the Neal Adams Batman.

DUFFY: It looked like Jack Kirby's work on the last issues of FANTASTIC FOUR and THOR were rushed, it looked like he was slipping a little.

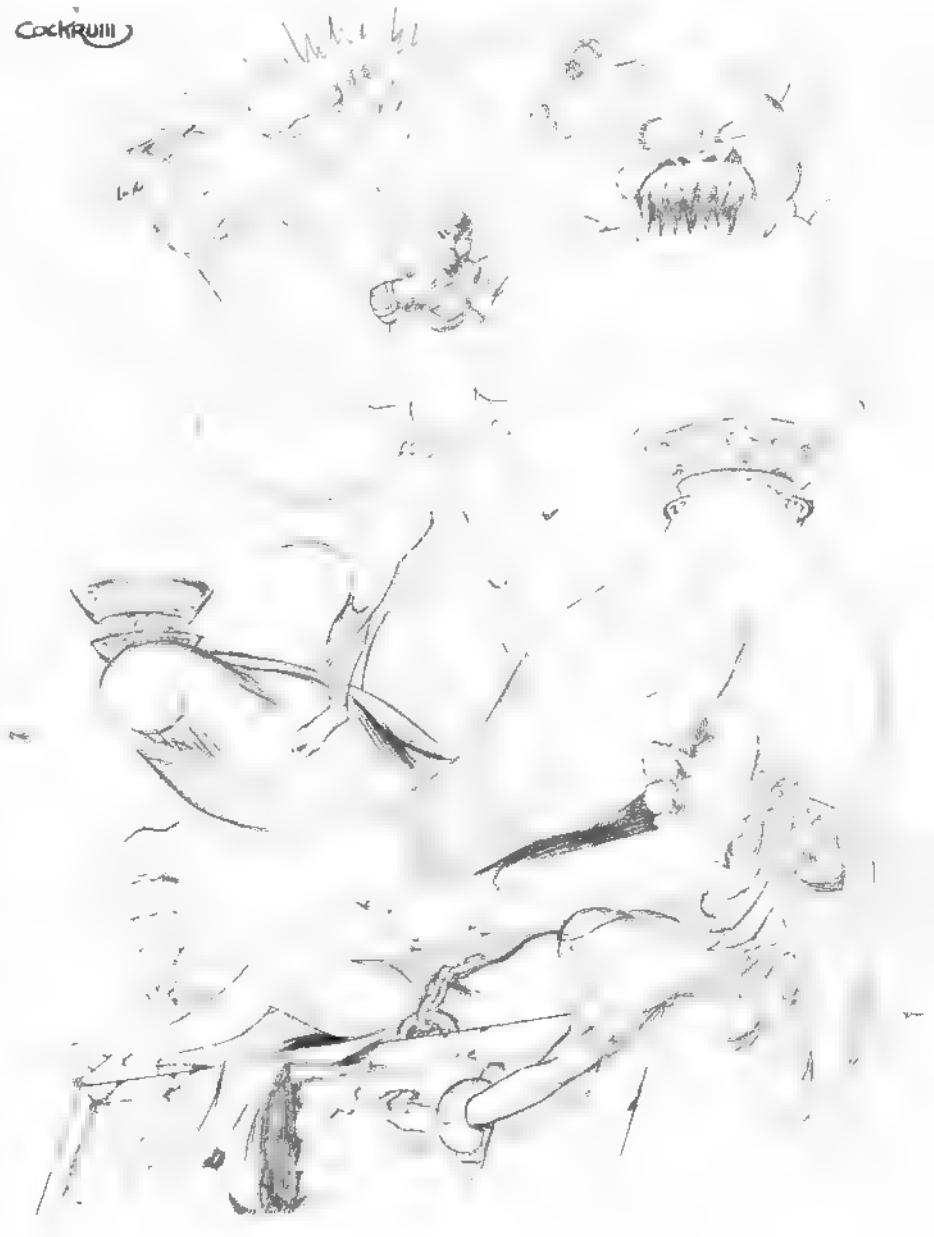
JOE: Well, Duffy, like I said before, I couldn't see this. I could see it in some of his covers, but I couldn't see it in the stories themselves. Maybe I just haven't looked at them that closely. But like I said before, some of the stories he did a while back were much better than some of the later ones. Number 98, the story that took place on the planet -- the prohibition-type characters. I thought he knocked himself out on those three. Frank Giacoia inked one of those books as I just needed a break. But I thought Kirby did a terrific job on that story. But like I said, he has his peaks. After a terrific story, it seems he does have a little let-down. But his letdowns aren't much, and he comes bouncing right back. You might have seen something I wasn't aware of. Although I've heard many people say this -- that they felt his last two books weren't up to par, that he was rushing them, knowing he was leaving, but I really couldn't see it. If you saw the pencils, you wouldn't say that. I mean, he certainly put everything in there. He shaded every little button and detail in. He's gotta' be twins! Even when he's not at his best, no one can tell a story like Jack!

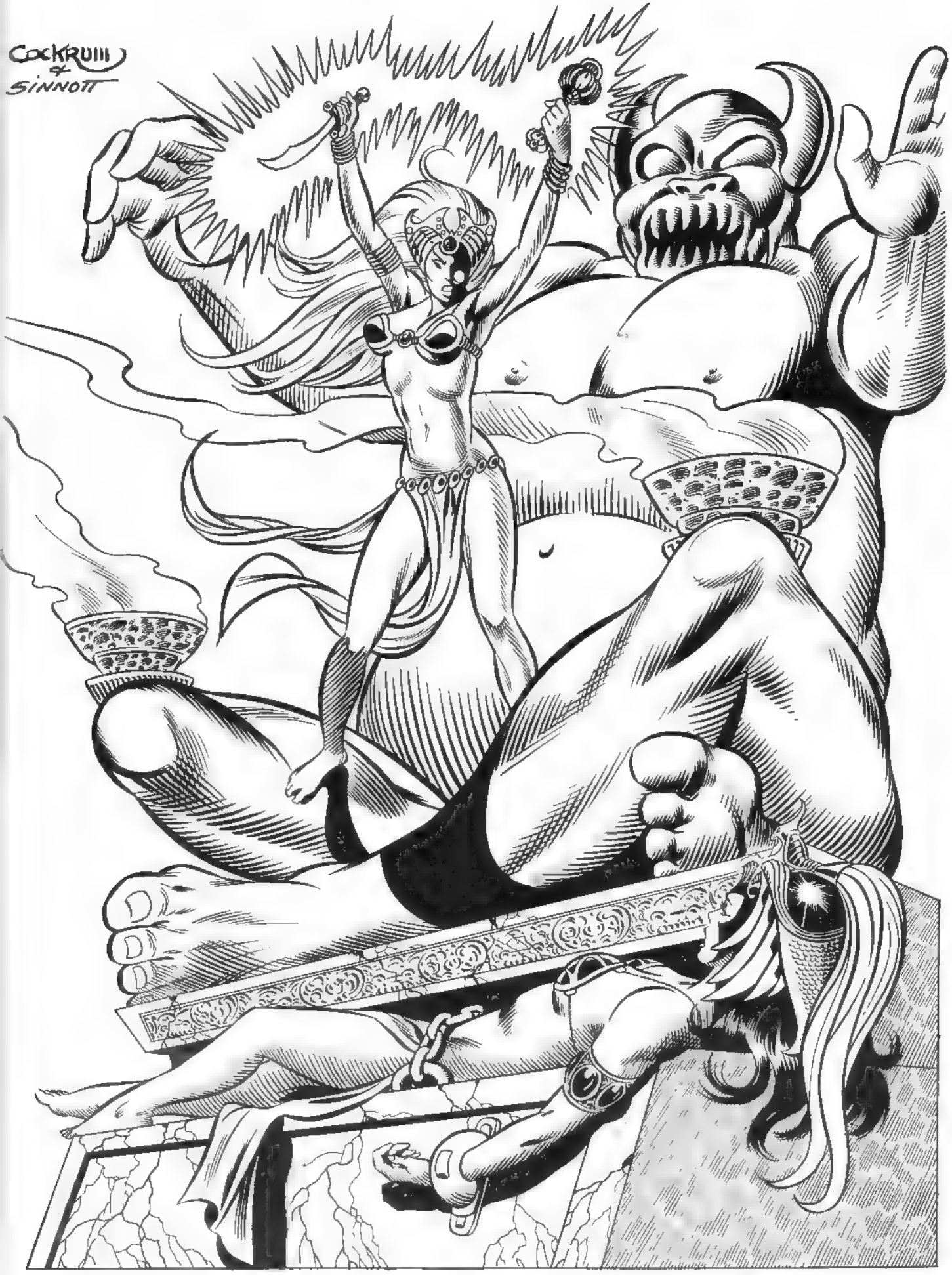
GARY: Y'know, I see a lot of your drawings - your fully inked illustrations -- in fanzines, and they resemble Kirby very much.

JOE: Well, some 'zine editors will write me and ask me for a drawing of Mr. Fantastic or the Thing or Johnny Storm or something like that. Well, naturally I draw it myself, but I'm drawing it the way Kirby drew it, at least the way I felt he drew it. And it comes out looking like the way I used to ink it for Kirby. Well, I did change Kirby's heads a little bit, not much, but just a little bit. So, naturally, the stuff came out looking like Kirby's work.

GARY: A while ago, you mentioned Frank Giacoia. He inked a couple FANTASTIC FOUR's a while back, and broke up your "run" of them. Why was this?

BELOW: Pencilled version of finished, inked drawing to right. RIGHT. Pencilled by Dave Cockrum, inked by Joe Sinnott.




COCKRUM
&
SINNOTT

JOE: Well, I think this was during the time of the last convention, and I wanted to go to the city. I was quite tired and I wanted some time off. I was really jammed up, and I wanted about a week off. So, they had two strips coming up at the same time, CAPTAIN AMERICA and the FF. So I called Sol [Brodsky] and said, "Sol, I can't do CAPTAIN AMERICA, I can only do one because I've got to take some time off, I'm climbing the walls." And he said "Joe, Stan would rather have you do the CAPTAIN AMERICA." He felt I was doing a good job. I had just started inking the Colan CAPTAIN AMERICA, and he didn't want to break that up right away. He said, "He'd [Stan] rather take you off the FF this issue." Giacoia could've inked the Colan CAPTAIN AMERICA just as well as he could've inked the FF, but that was the reason I didn't do the FF that issue. The same thing happened a few issues later.

GARY: Would you have preferred to ink the FANTASTIC FOUR?

JOE: Right. Only for the reason that it did break up that run. In other words, I felt that I did so many of them that I did want to continue with the FF. In fact I would've liked to have inked John Romita's FF if John had done the complete pencilling. He does beautiful work. He's got nice figures and it's easy to ink. I did want to continue on the FF and am happy that I'm back with John Buscema. I really like working with John.

GARY: Y'know, John's brother, Sal, said that John's pencils are so precise and perfect that inking them, no matter how good they're inked, almost ruins them.

JOE: That's right. You can't improve John's work, really. For example, his girls have little noses. If you're not careful, you'll ruin that nose and it won't look like his character. You can't really improve his work. His men are handsome, they can't be more heroic, his muscles are perfect, his action. . . There's just nothing you can improve on John's work. Nothing.

GARY: Are there any inkers today that are still influencing your work?

JOE: Gee, I don't think so. Although I always liked Giacoia's work, even when he was working at DC; I used to like the way he inked the romance books. But I never copied any inker when I first started out in comics, I used to copy Caniff when I was a kid; and Alex Raymond. I used to copy their styles a lot. When I went to the Cartoonist's & Illustrator's School I went to Raymond a little bit. Although I wished I had stuck with the Caniff style because he was much looser.

You see, Raymond had a tendency to tighten you up. Everything is more precise. But, I never really copied anyone's inking. Inking just came naturally. I had periods years ago when I just turned out some horrendous inking because I overinked everything. In fact, I like the way John Severin -- I mean -- Severin is probably my favorite all-around artist, adventure artist. Buscema is the best illustrator. John is really an illustrator. He's the best in the business, I feel. Severin is the best all-over adventure artist, I feel. He does the best war and the best western and his humor is unsurpassed. His authenticity is just great. Everything's just perfect. And I also like the way he inks. He's got a rough style that is completely harmonious with his type of story. I really wish I could ink like Severin, although it's completely different from mine.

GARY: I think Tom Palmer is one of the very best inkers in the business. Do you enjoy his work?

JOE: Very much. In fact, I was looking at some of his originals yesterday. I was amazed at the effort he puts into his work. The zip-a-tone and special effects. He must have spent a fortune on zip-a-tone, and it must be very time consuming. He plans everything so thoroughly with the different patterns of zip-a-tone to create such special effects. In the smallest detail, in the smallest areas.

It's amazing. I think the originals -- the reproductions are great also, but the originals -- they look beautiful. I have never used zip-a-tone, etc. on any of the superhero books that I can recall. I would like to use it on occasion, but I don't have the time really. I also thought Palmer and Adams was a fine combo.

GARY: Since we're talking about inkers on John Buscema's pencils...

JOE: Excuse me, Gary, but I also think that issues 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the SILVER SURFER were just unsurpassable, with Sal inking with a special style that he didn't seem to follow through in later books, but it was solid blacks with no feathering at all if I remember correctly. I thought they were tremendous. Do you remember the books?

GARY: Yes, that was just what I was going to bring up...

JOE: Yeah. I think it was number five that really impressed me.

GARY: Could you give any aspiring artists tips about drawing and inking a comic book and breaking into the business?

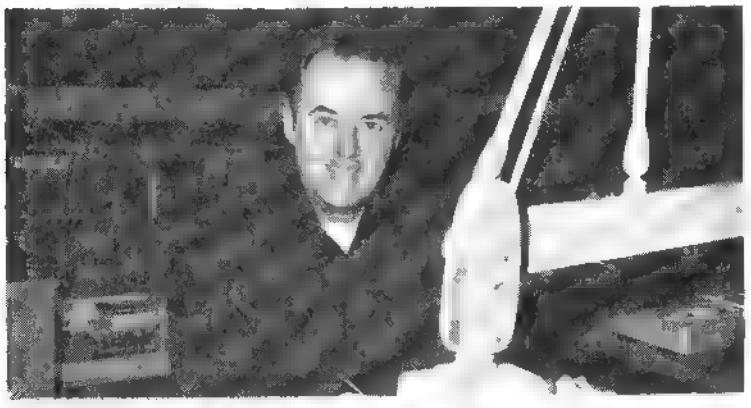
JOE: Gee, Gary, it's pretty hard to say. Like everyone else says, you read it all the time, you've got to practice and practice and practice. I mean, I'm drawing all the time. Even when I'm sitting at the dining room table. I have paper. But I have gotten in the bad habit of, for years, all I draw when I'm doodling, are heads. All different types -- cowboys, superheroes. When I should be drawing the body. When I was in school, I drew the body. But I like to draw heads, different characters -- all types. Humorous type characters, everything. I've got stacks of the stuff I've saved over the yearsthat I just enjoy keeping. But I would say the one thing is to keep drawing the human figure, over and over, in every position. Learning the muscles, just the basic muscles, you don't have to put the muscles in like Hogarth used to put them in. He was a terrific figure man also. Buscema puts in the basic muscles and they're beautiful. That's all you need. I would say just keep drawing the figure.

Gee, I don't know. I wouldn't want to discourage anyone from entering the comic book field if that's what they really like. I think if I had it to do over again, I wouldn't enter comic books, because I feel that I'm not really enjoying myself doing it. I did years ago when they had the variety and the artist did everything -- the pencilling and the inking. The stories were fun to do. Superheroes in the past 6-7 years, it's been a real grind. I'll say that. It's been work, very hard work. I enjoy doing the TREASURE CHEST stories, because there's variety there, but you have to do what you can do best. In other words, right now, I feel that I'm a half-way decent inker and that's how I'm basically earning my living. I do little things on the side ocassionally, like advertising work. They help supplement my income, and they're also interesting to do. I enjoy doing them. I think I honestly least enjoy doing the comics that I'm doing for Marvel. That's really what it amounts to, Gary. If I had it to do over again, I would probably -- well, I've always been a frustrated sports cartoonist. In fact, I did one the other day on Willie Mays. He was about to hit his three thousandth hit. Y'know, he's the only player who's had 2,000 hits and also 600 homeruns, so when something like this comes up, I'll knock out a cartoon for the paper, the local paper. I enjoy doing this type of work, and I wish I could do this on a daily basis. But, with four kids, I've got to make a half-way decent living and the only way I can do it is by working in the comics, I feel. But I'm not really doing what I want to do and I guess I always have my eye out for something else to do because I feel that I'm really not happy doing comics. It's just such a terrible grind. Inking the same thing over and over again. It can become a tedious bore doing the same thing.

It would be different if you were drawing, creating something different, but when you're inking the same characters, the same background -- I mean, basically the same type of thing over and over, it's like an assembly line production, which is what it really is. It is quite a chore, and I feel I should get out someday, and do something I really enjoy doing. That I think I would like to do. In fact, I would like to do fashion work. I have done some in the past. I've just done some about a month ago. I really enjoy doing that. But, y'know, I like comics. I've been saying that I'm going to get away from it for years, but I've always stuck with it. There's a certain satisfaction, even today, of seeing your work in a comic book, though. Even today, I keep all my comics. Some of the things I wouldn't show anybody, because I'm not proud of them. It would always be nice to have a syndicated strip someday too. I guess that's the goal of every cartoonist. But I really wish I had a character very much like Beetle Bailey type. When I was in school, I had a character very much like Beetle Bailey, this was before Beetle Bailey came out, and I wish I had followed that through. I thought I had a feel for that in those days, and I really enjoyed doing it. But at the time I could also draw realistic type characters.

At the C&I School they kept pushing me towards the realistic type of comic strip and then, naturally, when Tom Gill got ahold of me I was doing the realistic type comic work and that's what I continued to do. But I really enjoy doing the light Beetle Bailey type thing. I wish I had gone through with that, but I guess everyone had those same aspirations, wishes and regrets.

This interview was conducted at the Statler Hilton Hotel, during the 1970 Comic Art Convention in New York City. Text approved by Joe Sinnott. Comic pages and covers reproduced in the pages of this interview are copyright 1972 the following companies: Chipden Publishing Corp., Canam Publishers, Geo. A Pflaum, Twentieth Century Fox Television, Inc.



PRAY FOR SIMON SAVAGE

by HANK ROSENFELD

"November 22, 1943...two days after the initial assault on the Japanese stronghold of Tarawa, six marines storm ashore ...On their shoulders rests the difference between victory and defeat! Thus is born the legend of... CAPTAIN SAVAGE AND HIS LEATHERNECK RAIDERS!" -issue # 1.

They say legends enever die, but this one didn't have much of a chance to live. After nineteen short issues the bearded (sometimes) captain and his band of leatherneck (sometimes) raiders joined the even shorter-lived Phantom Eagle in Marvel's files of "disabled" war veterans; otherwise known as the failure file.

The good captain and his group left comicdom rather quietly in the chill of 1970, the final issue being dated March 1970. No fan uprising followed, no mail swamp; instead perhaps a few sighs of relief from earlier disgruntled fans.

Fandom is a fickle party and war comic buffs are perhaps the most fickle. They weren't taken by B-movie men who romped thru the pages of Marvel comics performing boringly within the bounds of the Comics Code Authority and thus, unrealisticly (not unlike any other Marvel war mag for that matter.) Marvel may have one of the best selling war comics in Sgt. Fury, but even this is obviously aimed toward the enjoyment of the bubblegum-brigade (8-12) of comic readers. My brother hardly misses an issue; he's 11.

Cavorting through various issues of SAVAGE, we find: Marines firing upon the enemy while dressed in women's garments; an 8 year old boy leading Savage and his men out of a Japanese prison camp; John Kennedy on his P.T. Boat rescuing the Raiders, in 1942, when in fact, in 1942, Kennedy was still in training school; and several other jocular characters including one Japanese general - General Ten Per Cent. My brother enjoyed that one.

Sgt. Fury has been around some 95-odd issues, quite a few portraying some unbelievable, unadulterated balderdash. Yet Savage lasted little more than 2 years. This can be explained in many ways.

Granted, the stubble-faced, stogie-stuffed Fury did bark some wierd orders in his time, and will continue to do so I imagine; but I can't recall Sgt. Fury and his Howlers ever storming a beach on *surfboards*, in their clothes yet; or having within their ranks a "soldier," who knocked off countless enemy onrushers with a bow and arrow?! I could go on but I trust you are aware of other character idiosyncrasies portrayed in Marvel's war comics.

When it was announced in the winter of 1967 that Marvel would present a new war series, support from the readers was of course expected. Stan Lee chose what seemed to be a great writer-artist one two punch when he assigned Gary Friedrich and Dick Ayers to Captain Savage And His Leatherneck Raiders. After all, hadn't Mike Friedrich and Ayers been great on Sgt. Fury (with the able assistance of John Severin) for about 20 issues before Savage debuted? Ayers had been Marvel's number one war artist and seemed the one to soar the series to great heights with his art. Furyophiles had clamored for more of his battle scribblings after he pencilled Sgt. Fury, so this was the new answer.

Ayers held Captain Savage up to a point of respectability the first seven or eight issues, when the stories resembled Sgt. Fury tales (the happy-go-lucky attitudes of the men, etc.). But when the stories began to decrease in appeal, Ayers' art also became uninteresting, until finally he left Savage to do CAPTAIN MARVEL and Don Heck, who had been drawing Mar-vell took over the war title. Even though his super-hero style showed in his pencils, Heck's art was pleasingly different for a few issues. (Incidentally Heck started pencilling with issue # 12). However, a thorn was pierced in the series when Arnold Drake began scripting. Drake, a recent addition to the Marvel staff at the time, is a movie writer as well as a comic scripter. Drake wrote only four Savage epics, but two were ridiculous, far more than "offbeat" as Stan Lee describes them.

These four issues were only the shovels, beginning to pick away at a grave site. I think the comic's "plot" had been selected a few months earlier. One could sense Savage and his battle band were on their last legs.

Captain Savage and the Raiders; a french lover (ala Dino Manelli), an irish seaman, a career marine sergeant, an indian ("Little Bear" representing Stan's quality image which he installs in all his books), a social worker from a city ghetto (no one as uninteresting as this can remain in a Marvel war mag; he was killed in issue 11. Bad mistake, Marvel!) were visibly well behind Sgt. Fury and his Howlers well before they reached their tenth episode.

Simon Savage is the skipper and former supporting character in Sgt. Fury comics. To the utter dismay of many fans, he changes his complete image thru the course of the Savage series. As it begins he is an intense figure; a virile flowing mustache above his lips, a stubble beard beneath them. His eyes flame with explosiveness, but his ways are not that of a mere barking sergeant. A turtle-necked pull-over fits snugly under the ever-present sweat stained brown marine shirt. His is the figure of a captain, a commander of men.

In issue 9 he becomes a changed man. The beard and mustache are gone. Gone also is the turtle neck. He is no longer the stern, respected man from CAPTAIN SAVAGE # 1. Thus, unfolds the turning point of the ill fated war series

Following this issue, Savage's personality fails miserably in the storyline; with only a glimmer of the old Captain appearing in issue # 12, after one of the raiders is laid to rest. He was now little more than a buck private due mainly to the fault of writers Drake and Friedrich. During the four Drake issues readers demanded the "old" Captain Savage but it was too late when Pvt. Lee and His Battlefatigued Writers realized they'd lost swamps of fans and had also sunk the series.

Finally, after an eight issue absence, the intense appearance returned; two issues later the series was kaput.

In issue # 19 the Captain appeared with his mustache and beard. The revered skipper is back intact. Friedrich and Ayers are there, the series is complete again! Nostalgia overwhelms the battle-mag buffs. A few fans begin scooping up loose change and maybe even a little of the paper stuff in preparation of a $2.00 subscription letter to Marvel. Faith in the one "too bad to be true" series seems to be restored! Issue # 19 projects realism; Savage is tormented, he cries: he is torn between his splitting family and the horrible war. Leaving his mate and his youngsters, he decides, at the end of this unique story, to remain in the war business. In the second to last panel of the tale Savage is solemnly stating, with the tears only a scant second away: "It might be the only way I can learn to live with myself." What will the next issue bring...

Issue 19 of Captain Savage and his Battlefield Raiders was the final episode. If the previous eighteen had approached the quality of issue 19, the series would have succeeded. But the mistakes were too vivid. The writers: Drake, Friedrich and Archie Goodwin, failed terribly in developing interesting images of what should have been five interesting characters. Only slight glimpses of personal lives came out thru the duration of the series. Much more could have been produced from an *indian*, a french lover, AND from Savage himself

Marvel made too many errors too early Readers gave up on Savage in less than a year. With so few readers left, the end came quietly for the skipper and his raiders were nowhere near, at any time in their short-lived career, the celebrated heights that Sgt. Fury and his howlers had attained. Fury and his men had won a place in the hearts of battle-mag buffs everywhere. Enemy Ace has been established there for quite some time. DC is also developing some new series' including "The Losers" and "The Unknown Soldier." Both are quickly gaining popularity throughout comicdom. Poor Savage and his men didn't fill a spot in anyone's lower gut.

I recently acquired a Spanish translated Marvel war comic. It was the Spanish rendition of CAPTAIN SAVAGE # 12. The cover in the American version reads, "Captain Savage And His Battlefield Raiders." The Spanish version reads, "El Sargento Furia."

Eminence, Savage and the raiders never attained.

F.F. SPECIAL'S GALLERY OF PAST ISSUE'S ARTISTIC TRIUMPHS!

MAGNETO	John G. Fantucchio
CAPTAIN AMERICA	Jim Steranko
BLACK KNIGHT	Howard Purcell
SPIDERMAN	John G. Fantucchio
SILVER SURFER	Barry Smith

Magneto

PERANIO
SINNOTT

PURCELL

THE AMAZING SPIDERMAN

SMITH.

fantagraphics' fan-mail

letters to the editor

Continued from page 2

but you can't deny his dramatic flair. That Barnabas Collins portrait was actually startling. Your other artists were good but Fantucchio and Purcell kind of swamped them. I didn't think even Newton was able to follow that act. Oh! Now that I thought of it, I hope that Wrightson illo is a sign of things to come.

As for the articles, I have to send Richardson's con article to the head of the class. I will admit that it might have been questionable to have con reports that were a year out of date but I hadn't read about any of them, and thus, enjoyed Richardson's effort immensely. He is as good a writer as he is an artist. Bill Cantey's "Man With the Golden Vest" was one of the best of his style. He is one of the elite among fan fiction writers. After this I will admit to a chuckle or two out of Bernie Bubnis' column and a few from Gordon Matthews' story. Cantey's interview had that undefinable something that said "Questionaire." I might be wrong, but that was my impression.

On the down side, I thought that Tony Isabella's column was a low point for him. I think that he spread himself too thin. He talked on so many *subjects* that he was unable to develop any of them sufficiently. I realize it might be a little difficult to get him to avoid this since you probably got him to do it on the condition that he could write on what he wished. However I think as an editor, you have some privileges and certainly some responsibility. I also think that the Conan column was a bit premature (I will admit that it was fun to compare his opinions with mine). I also think that Wasserman was a little off base with his "pulp fiction" approach. It would have been much better, I think, to *Heroic Fantasy* as a standard of comparison since it is a graphic interpretation of the greatest character in heroic fantasy. His treatment of Barry Smith was also a bit unsubstantial. I for one think that a comparison of Smith's rather freewheeling earlier style to his present techniques would have been more fertile a field for his article. It seems to me that Smith is a bit preoccupied with clear cut storytelling and dramatics, and more than a little conservative in the light of those dazzling visual fireworks he did in the Avengers. In fact, the sequence with Iron Man charging through that computerized obstacle course is my all-time favorite action sequence by Barry Smith. I feel that overall it would be best to wait about two years to write an analysis of any strip. Comic books are a growing form and you have to be able to stand a ways back and view it as a whole to really appreciate or evaluate it. I consider Barry to be just about the finest comic book illustrator around so I felt that Mr. Wasserman's refusal to give the art a thorough examination to be a serious falling in the article.

[Regarding your annoyance with the new wave of slick art-zines: I think fandom is going through a transitional period. After turning out some uniformly mediocre fanzines for 7 or 8 years, the fan publishers tried something new. Unfortunately, the new slick art-zines came on the scene too many and too fast, not enough of them being done correctly. As was the case with the ditto, memio and itek fanzines of four years ago, fans are beginning to be more selective in their purchasing of the expensive 'zines with page after page of finely rendered artwork (and some not-so-finely rendered artwork mixed with the quality work). Neal Pozner, in an article entitled, "R.I.P. Fandom" in THE CREATIVE ADVENTURE # 1, yells at fandom for supporting the slick art-zines over the older fan-fanzines (a term we never had to use before the "pro-fanzines" were published). He makes a good point. But we must remember, the slick art-zine has only existed in the last couple years. They've not yet perfected their format. Look how long it's taken for 'zines like COMIC CRUSADER, THE COLLECTOR, WITZEND, or even FF, to evolve into intelligent fanzines. I think we're facing a new era of fan-publishing; the wave of slick art-zines will be cut down; only the best will remain. And these, unlike most art-zines out today, will have personality and depth, as did every fanzine published prior to 1969, as do several quality fanzines put out today --GGG]

BERNIE BUBNIS
65 Walnut Avenue
East Farmingdale, L.I. N.Y. 11735

About the recent FF: The cover blew me off my seat! It was just great. John is most definitely an illustrator first and a comic book artist second. Your fine printing had a devestating effect on my eyes and all my non-fan friends loved it.

Tony Isabella's column started off very well building interest and ideas with an ironic sense of writing ability. Then it faded into the horizon with a "pros and lesser folks" I Love Best theme.

The Purcell interview was great because Purcell covered quite a bit of territory with his novella answers. Reprinting examples of an artist's work is always appreciated by this fan. I don't have the memory or time to look back into the files to see what is being talked about. Good show.

It was definitely your best FF to date. The material was all above average, as I hope a 'zine of this circulation would be able to obtain. The real things that contribute to a good 'zine is the layout and thoughtfulness that goes on behind the scenes. FF has an excellent crisp layout, and I love leaving a copy on the living room coffee table. Neighbors have to look twice to understand the love and devotion in a fan's heart.

BILL CANTEY
809 Stonefield Avenue
Charleston, S.C. 29412

Beautiful interview with Howard Purcell, a hard-working artist with an exceptional talent for the dramatic illustration.

And finally! A 'zine with a full color Fantucchio cover. John's work always looks good, but once you've seen his paintings, you'll never forget his unique talent for mixing and merging colors. If this is your last color cover for awhile, you made a great choice. A certain comic book publisher could give itself an important lift by featuring Fantucchio covers on its line of magazines at least once a year; with an "inside info" page of comic news and views by John. The ex-

plosive talent and personal depth of John Fantucchio would be a valuable asset to any publishing company.

It's always encouraging to discover that highly responsible and intelligent men like John Adkins Richardson are interested in comic fandom and FF. Don't let him get off that easy; keep bugging him for more material.

And finally, a great job of putting it all together. I'm just *soooo* glad I don't have to do it. I recall, you weren't satisfied with the printing job. If I were an artist instead of a writer, maybe I'd be disturbed. But, FF 13 looked good to me. Looks like you've gotten all the gremlins out of your typewriter at last. Congrats on that, and for turning out another fine piece of work.

DAVE HOGAN
6400 Center Street # 50
Mentor, Ohio 44060

In the relatively brief time since my last LOC (re FF 11) things have changed. National has taken off, and Marvel has slumped badly. Exciting new concepts have surfaced along with an influx of talented young artists and writers, most notably in the Warren books. FANTASTIC FANZINE, too, has changed. First, FF 12, came a glorious full color cover painting. You broke your promise by having another gracing FF 13, but I don't mind. A larger size, three column treatment, and more halftones gave new dimension to FF. You've got a winner, Mr. Groth.

The Fantucchio cover: Flashing colors, believable blending with the photo and a liberal dose of Imagination made it at least as good as Kline's for FF 12. Beautiful.

Fantucchio's "Mr. D" was well-written and true enough, but it's difficult for me to really pass comment on it because my thoughts regarding Ditko are unclear. At the risk of losing my life at the hands of the army of Ditko fans, I'll say that he is definitely unique, but I simply can't get past his extremely over-simplified techniques. Sometimes I think I like his work -- other times I don't.

BELOW: The title logo to Bill Cantey's short story, "The Golden Vest" by Kenneth Smith, being reprinted from last issue due to poor printing.

By all means retain your editorial page. Too many 'zines lack this feature or have half-hearted or half-assed editorials.

Wasserman's Conan articles were good and his points regarding the almost bloodless atmosphere of the Marvel stories are well taken. However, I objected to Jeff's tendency to relate storylines of past issues. Such a practice is utterly superfluous to fans who have seen those issues (and I assume most have).

The trio of convention reports was fairly interesting, the best being Bill Cantey's with its personalized treatment.

"The Man With the Golden Vest" was, like all of Bill Cantey's short stories, solidly written and entertaining but was far too short. Not enough time was devoted to construction of a believable mood. Good climax. It's a real shame that Ken Smith's logo was botched.

Interviews are always interesting and the Cantey interview was no exception. I imagine a well-conducted interview is a sure-fire feature for any fanzine; most fans seem to enjoy them.

The Fantucchio portfolio was hurt by unremarkable reproduction but still came off well. John is another very unique artist.

The obvious highpoint of FF 13 was the Howard Purcell interview, due mainly to the willingness of Mr. Purcell. Worthwhile anecdotes, intelligent opinions and a frank attitude made this interview one of the best I've read in some time. The comics covers reproduced well as did the illustrations and photos. A fine job.

Artwork throughout was well above average, especially Newton's illustration for the short story. I was pleased to see Marchesano represented. I didn't feel the Cockrum back cover was up to par with his previous efforts and it was especially hampered by the unprofessional lettering along the bottom. Coulda' been better.

I noticed that the overall printing quality was a notch below that of previous issues and things like Smith's spoiled logo and the unfortunate lopping off of the top of Gary Kato's good illustration was bad news.

Such complaints are happily few and far between and in spite of the flaws, FANTASTIC FANZINE 13 proved for the second straight time (# 12 being the first) that you publish one of the most outstanding 'zines in fandom.

[The second and third part's of John's "Mr. D." article will run in FF 14 and 15 respectively; issue 15 will also carry the complete Ditko checklist --GGG]

ANTHONY KOWALIK
15641 Union Avenue
Harvey, Illinois 60426

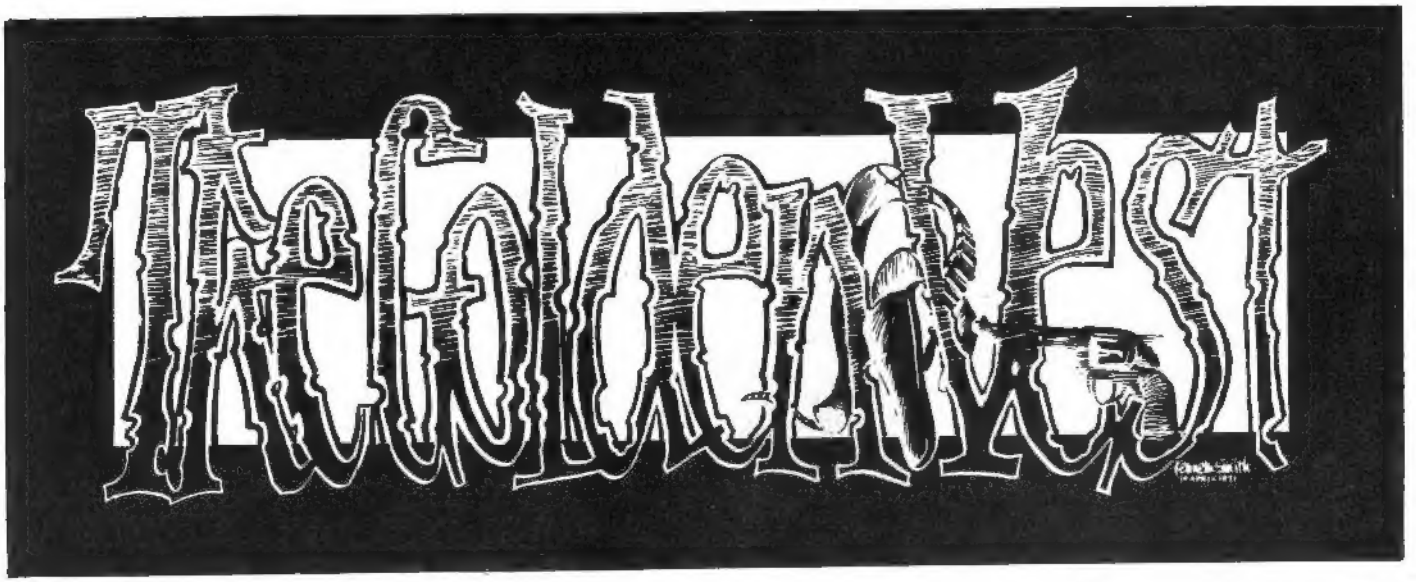
The Howard Purcell interview was very well done, especially thanks to Howard Purcell. However, there's something that I'd like clarified. What part did Russ Heath have on the cover of SEA DEVILS # 9 and Murphy Anderson on the cover of # 35? On those two issues, at least, Mr. P. certainly didn't do the complete covers as their representation might have lead one to believe. I'd like to know, though, precisely what portions of these covers were done by Mr. Purcell, if any. OK?

[OK. I selected the comics reproduced with the Purcell interview from a rough outline given me from Howard. I have not been able to find out if Anderson and/or Heath had anything to do with those covers in question; though I suspect they may have pencilled and/or inked them. Can any SEA DEVILS' collector help me out? --GGG]

JIM WILSON
942 Jupiter Street
Atlanta, Ga. 30309

...I'm quite disappointed again, in that the review of the book in GEORGE seemed to take all the component parts of the book and cut them up without any regard for the unit, the whole; for again, the "atmosphere" that always makes FF a pleasure no matter what its content is. I hope they can see this with your second SPECIAL; I know I'm looking forward to it. Doubtless quite a few others are too.

[I'm sorry I had only enough room to print this small excerpt from your long LOC; next issue, I may have three pages devoted to letters, but, particularly with this issue, space was very tight. I have to agree with you on the GEORGE review, though; it seemed a bit on the negative side; barely mentioning the exceptional Purcell & Fantucchio features -GGG]



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